Research Question: What Practices Are Teachers Using During Problem Solving Opportunities With Toddlers?


Definition- A Problem Solving Opportunity: A problem solving opportunity occurs when a child fails to manage his/her level of arousal and expresses strong (positive or negative) emotion or behaves in a manner disruptive or harmful to self or others.

Teacher Practice Study: Seven lead teachers and the 1-2 year old children in each of their classrooms were observed over the course of a week to record teacher practices during problem solving opportunities. Teacher and parent interviews were conducted and the children’s temperament was assessed. The professional development history of each teacher was gathered.

Data Analysis: Observational data were reviewed and coded to reflect a wide range of teacher practices used during problem solving opportunities. Three hundred and sixty-four conflicts or problems were coded and analyzed.

Results: Crying, climbing, screaming, pulling and pushing, fighting over a toy and hitting were the most often recorded child behaviors. Transitions (includes all major transitions) and teacher led activities were the top two categories recorded for context in which conflicts occurred followed by free play inside and outside and then diapering. Teacher practices used the least often to respond to a child’s behavior included: stating or describing what was happening, providing choices, labeling emotions, discussing options and giving children words to use in defense or to express feelings.

Future Directions: A new pilot study is underway to test the efficacy of a problem solving intervention with teachers and toddlers. A future personnel preparation grant is planned.

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