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PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TRAIL

Iditarod's *Red Lantern* custom comes from the lit kerosene lamp that was traditionally hung outside a roadhouse to light the way for mushers en route with mail or supplies. This is the reason the last Iditarod musher to complete the race is referred to as the "Red Lantern".

Nome hosts a small banquet for finishers who miss the larger, more formal event. A highlight of the Red Lantern Banquet is hearing the mushers' tales from the back of the pack. These are stories that involve bad luck, challenges, and most of all perseverance. The stories most often include humor and a lesson or two for the next race.

When my son and I left Nome we started a *Red Lantern* tradition of our own. Every New Year's Eve we would light our red lantern and reflect on the year. Our stories provided a chance to examine the past year's successes and challenges, recognize accomplishments and reflect on lessons learned as we moved on to a new year. This

provided a forum for celebrating accomplishments and acknowledging what we had *not yet* accomplished. There's tremendous power in what [Carol Dweck](#) describes as releasing the tyranny of now and harnessing the power of *not yet*.

In a recent TED Talk, Carol describes research on the difference between students who have what she describes as a 'growth mindset' and those whose perspective was 'fixed'. When faced with failure students with a growth mindset reacted in a positive way and recognized that "their skills could be developed." Those students' whose mindset was fixed "felt that their intelligence had been up for judgment" and experienced failure as catastrophic. In another study children who had a 'fixed' orientation reported that they would consider cheating the next time, or they would look at someone who did more poorly than they did in order to feel good about themselves. What did the growth mindset kids do? They reflected on their mistakes, learned from them and made corrections.

This change in thinking provides a path to ultimate success rather than being left with a sense of failure and defeat. It also stimulates brain activity; strengthening neurons and forming new connections, which in turn increases the likelihood that better solutions will be found. This brain stuff isn't news to any of you working in the field of early intervention. What might be a shift is recognizing that this also applies to our ability to grow as professionals.

As you contemplate the past year and plan for the new one in terms of where you are as a service provider, and where your program is on the continuum of best practice; be sure to celebrate your successes. In those areas that are identified as needing development, don't drop out of the race, consider shifting your thinking to "We aren't there *quite yet*, how can we move in that direction?"

Laurie Thomas, M.Ed
State EI/ILP Manager

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Diggin' Data

ILP Database How-To for New Staff

A number of emails have been received of late regarding how to get a new staff into the ILP database. Here is your how-to for your new staff member:

1. Go to our ILP db address ilp.dhss.alaska.gov
2. Click on 'Request a Login'



303.21 Infant or toddler with a disability.

(2) Has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that - (i) Has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay*; and (ii) Includes conditions such as chromosomal abnormalities; genetic or congenital disorders; sensory impairments; inborn errors of metabolism; disorders reflecting disturbance of the development of the nervous system; congenital infections; severe attachment disorders; and disorders secondary to exposure to toxic substances, including fetal alcohol syndrome.

This does not preclude a program from choosing to enroll a child as non-Part C with a lesser delay and/or significant risk factors.

** delay under Part C in Alaska is defined as experiencing a 50% or greater delay in one or more developmental area*

Questions for this column are considered and responded to through a review of statute, regulation and policy and other supporting documents and vetted by the State team through a consensus process.

Please submit questions for "Stump the State" to:

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AAEYC Conference

January 29 - 30, 2015

The AAEYC Conference is quickly approaching, so if you have not registered yet please remember to do so as soon as possible. The Hilton Hotel had a special rate of \$92 per night for conference attendees and the code is AEEYC. Infant Learning attendees have a special conference rates, which is the same as last year, \$100 for 2 day registration.



In order to accommodate feedback received from last year, ILP will be sponsoring workshops Thursday and Friday. However ILP staff will be able to choose any workshops they would like to attend during the conference. The following is a list of the workshops ILP will be sponsoring this year:

How Using the ASQ Online System Can Help Better Understand the Children You Work With (This will be a panel discussion and is aimed at Child Care Providers, but ILP staff are welcome to attend and share how ASQ Online is managed in their area.) Thursday 9:45 - 11:45 am

Dr. Larry Byrd - *Working With Parents of Children With FASD*, Thursday 1:15 - 2:45 pm

Dr. Larry Byrd - *Common Behavior Problems in Young Children*, Thursday 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Dr. Larry Byrd - *Challenges of Engaging Families Where the Parent has Been Prenatally Impacted*, Friday 9:45 - 11:45 am

Kimala Rein - *Vision Impairment Services and the Resources for Alaskan ILP Providers*. Friday 1:15-2:45

PJ Hatfield-Bauer - *Creating Community through Play Environments: Choosing Toys that invite participation from every age group*, Friday 3:30 - 4

For further details please go to the AEYC website anchorageaeyc.org. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the conference.

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7 KEY PRINCIPLES

Looks Like/Doesn't Look Like



1. Infants and toddler learn best through every day experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.

Key Concepts

- Learning activities and opportunities must be functional, based on child and family interest and enjoyment
- Learning is relationship-based
- Learning should provide opportunities to practice and build upon previously mastered skills
- Learning occurs through participation in a variety of enjoyable

activities	
This principle DOES look like this:	This principle DOES NOT look like this:
Using toys and materials found in the home or community setting	Using toys, materials and other equipment the professional brings to the visit
Helping the family understand how their toys and materials can be used or adapted	Implying that the professional's toys, materials or equipment are the "magic" necessary for child progress
Identifying activities the child and family like to do which build on their strengths and interests	Designing activities for a child the focus on skill deficits or are not functional or enjoyable
Observing the child in multiple natural settings, using family input on child's behavior in various routines, using formal and informal developmental measures to understand the child's strengths and developmental functioning	Using only standardized measurements to understand the child's strengths, needs and developmental levels
Helping caregivers engage the child in enjoyable learning opportunities that allow for frequent practice and mastery of emerging skills in natural settings	Teaching specific skills in a specific order in a specific way through "massed trials and repetition" in a contrived setting
Focusing intervention on caregivers' ability to promote the child's participation in naturally occurring, developmentally appropriate activities with peers and family members	Conducting sessions or activities that isolate the child from his/her peers, family members or naturally occurring activities
Assuming principles of child learning, development, and family functioning apply to all children regardless of disability label	Assuming that certain children, such as those with autism, cannot learn from their families through naturally occurring learning opportunities

Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments

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RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE

Did you know that, according to the Department of Labor, the number one reason people leave their jobs is a lack of recognition? Getting supervisors to recognize their staff is hugely important, but arguably just as important and less highlighted is peer-to-peer recognition. Don't miss an opportunity to recognize one or several of those you work with who are the unsung heroes in our field!

The Alaska Infant Learning Program Association (AILPA) is extending the deadline for accepting nominations for three awards to be presented to three individuals who have made significant, long-term contributions in the field of early intervention in the state of Alaska. The new deadline is **Tuesday January 13th**. Please fax or e-mail nominations to Shannon Parker at FOCUS Inc.



**Alaska Infant Learning
Program Association**

Fax: 907-694-6015 | e-mail:
sparker@focusoutreach.org

If you have questions or need more information give Shannon a call at 907-694-6002.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation Family Infant Toddler Program (F.I.T.)

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) Family Infant Toddler Program (FIT) serves the community of Bethel and the 58 villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region. The region has approximately 25,000 residents with Bethel being the largest community with 6,300 residents. Traveling the region is difficult as the area is about the size of Oregon, but without the luxury of a road system. In order to reach the communities in the region, traveling by plane is almost always necessary. Out of the 58 villages, the F.I.T. Program currently has children enrolled in 42 of them. Subsistence is the way of life in the region and it is becoming more difficult with climate change affecting the area. More reports of substance abuse and neglect and harm are also happening, which means the number of referrals from OCS are increasing.

YKHC's FIT Program is currently administered through the tribal administration and has been since at least 2007. Our ILP staff is currently made up of four developmental specialists, Shannon Irving, Annie Anvil, Monica Turrentine, Julia Street, with Deela Lynn Coutu who serves as ILP coordinator. One developmental specialist position is open and

Deela would like to fill it as soon as she can. Deela would like to find someone qualifies for the position and who would fit into the team model. If that person lives in the region and is local, we would be thrilled. Deela believes in staff relationships and wants staff to all be under same model. She says - "the staff take care of each other, and are cohesive."

Developmental specialists travel to outlying communities and conduct in-home visits and families also visit our office in Bethel for monthly therapy services provides the framework for our service delivery model. YKHC has a dedicated week each month, except for January, where children visit Bethel for their therapy services. Children receive services according to their IFSP, which can include Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Therapy. If they see multiple therapists, they see them all together including developmental specialists, so there is only one appointment for the family.

Approximately 95% of families receive Medicaid, which pays for families' airfare, lodging, and cab fare. Cab fare can also be provided by FIT for families that need additional cab rides.

Living in such an expansive region presents multiple logistical challenges when trying to reach families. Travel costs are increasing and the weather does not always cooperate, but the program is always striving to provide thoughtful and meaningful service to all of our families, especially the hard-to-reach ones.

Recruiting from the lower 48 can be difficult because "you can't prepare people for living off the road system," Deela says. Because of this, YKHC requires a 2 year commitment, but offers \$10, 000 for relocation and moving expenses. To build cohesiveness, YKHC FIT staff will celebrate birthdays, go kayaking together, and sometimes take dance lessons together with the contract therapists when they are in town. Despite the challenges, Deela says YKHC has an "amazing, incredible staff that is well-trained" and that the FIT Program always aims to "get services to families that they want." YKHC.org

Our Kayak Adventure!



Team photo of Bethel F.I.T. Staff and contractors.

(Left to right) Shannon Irving, Julia Street, Annie Anvil, Monica Turrentine, Lynn Coutu, Patricia Morgan, Melissa Shaw, Melissa Card, and a random guy photo bombing us.

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On the Topic of BRINGING TOYS to HOME VISITS

Yea! Yipee! You're headed out on a home visit - or perhaps several visits for the day, tis' the life of a home visitor. What do you bring? Paperwork? Equipment? (*Gasp*) **T..O..Y..S?**



You're likely already familiar with the Seven Key Principals of Early Intervention. The first one reads - Infants and toddlers learn best through every day experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.

So what does this really mean? We shouldn't bring toys to home visits? Does this mean me? Or is that for the other therapists and educators in my agency? According to recent research, interventionist's around the country **are** changing the way they do home visits. Instead of bringing toys to home visit, educators and therapists are shifting to toy lending libraries for families, or even better, using the family's toys and materials. (Nwokah, et. al; The American Journal of Play, 2013).

It's not just about the toys. We know that play activities *in the context of caring and responsive relationships* are critical to a child's healthy development, especially when a child experiences delays in their development. (Nwokah, 2013) and more early

interventionists seem to be on board to support that.

As a long-time home visitor myself, and one who *loved* toys perhaps more than anyone else; I couldn't wait to try out a special toy with a child. Kim's internal dialogue: "New puzzle... can't wait to show it to Susie... new ball... I can't wait to see Joey throws it up in the air! He's going to love it and so many new skills will happen." I filled up my toy bags - *one for each child* with whom I had a home visit scheduled for that day.

The toys *were* fun for me, the child, and sometimes the parent. Sometimes, the parents even joined in with the play...especially when invited. But then there was the hauling, cleaning and maintenance of the toys. Making sure, I had *all* the pieces and the toys were clean. My car looked and felt like a used toy store as toys would roll out when the car doors opened.

BUT, with the new research, training, and advice from my colleagues over the years I discovered a greater freedom and a more relationship-based approach through using materials available in the home. After years of working in this way I am a believer in this approach to supporting children's learning. So what made me change?

First of all it was way easier not to pack, haul, sort, clean, and put away the toys... the toy processing was eliminated! That was kind of nice.

Second, I didn't have the child's and/ or siblings emotions around the toy; watching for your bag when you came. Did they really see ME behind all those toys? Kids would sometimes get upset or cry when the toys left. Dealing with siblings who also wanted to play with the toys... or bringing separate toys for the siblings was eliminated.

Third, it was more meaningful and natural to simply "be an observer" and watch the family play as they usually do with their own toys in their *natural environment*. Using the families' materials helped me learn what motivated the parents, the child, and how the family played, interacted and learned in home. In some homes, there might not be many toys (or any toys, that I could see) or simply parts of toys... so there too, it was interesting to watch the family in action, what did they do during the day?

Seventy percent of children receiving early intervention services in the United States are living in poverty (Nwokah, 2013). In early intervention definitely see plenty of families without toys to play with. What activities do they engage in? How do children in those homes play and learn and interact.

So, here's where the creativity, challenge and fun comes in! How can I teach/coach/adapt the IFSP goals in partnership with this family in this (natural) environment with what materials they have/don't have?

As I began to rely on materials in the family's home, I found that parents were more

interactive and were more apt to play with their own toys when I asked "how does this one work?" or "oh...how do you play with this one?" It was great seeing the parent's natural style come out with familiar toys. It helped me to better understand the parent-child dynamic. And, now I could imagine how play might/might not happen when I'm not there - (remember what McWilliams says; "the real invention happens between home visits). Parents seemed more interested and involved in the visit when they're the ones playing with their children. I began to realize that the IFSP goals could be more successful within the context of the family's life, with their toys, and during their typical routines.

10 Steps to Decreasing Toy Bag Dependence:

If you're ready to take the full plunge to toy bag freedom...

1. Identify materials and toys already available in the home and likely to be engaging while visiting. Plan ahead to incorporate those materials/routines into your next visit.
2. Join parent/s care provider in activities already occurring in the household when you arrive.
3. Plan activities/routines for your next visit before leaving. Joint planning supports problem solving, partnerships, and allows for selective choice of any necessary materials....
4. Community field trip - plan to go out to the park or special place or activity in the community with the family.
5. Organize a play date with other families, or attend some event where they naturally play with other children.
6. With permission ahead of time, ask the child to get toys or show you their toys.

If you experiencing withdrawal symptoms and need time to transition from complete toy bag dependence...

7. Decrease the size of the toy bag - just bring one or two toys... when done - say "now what should we do? What should we play with?"
8. Leave the toy bag just outside or by the door when you walk in - only use the toys when necessary.
9. Pretend to forget the toy bag? What should we do now?!
10. Demonstrate the use of your toy for opportunities to practice a skill. Then look for a toy around the house that could demonstrate the skill. Practice using their toy.

(Adapted from materials from FACETS - a joint project of Kansas University Affiliated Program and Valdosta State University)

In 2015 consider accepting the toy bag challenge; you're sure to lighten your load!

Kim Mix, M.S.

State Program Specialist

NEW INFANT LEARNING PROGRAM STAFF

Hired from January 2014 to present



Alaska Center for Children & Adults	Jessica Schultz, Speech Language Pathologist Amy Diaz, Program Assistant Brittany Luddington, Social Worker
Norton Sound Health Corporation	Kristen Barron, Occupational Therapist
Focus	JoAnne Jarnac, Speech Language Pathologist Christine Aki, Speech Language Pathologist
Sprout	Jeff von Rekowski, Speech Language Pathologist Jeanne Anderson, Occupational Therapist Tara Hagge, Program Assistant Hanna Young Nancy Radtke, Intern
Programs for Infants & Children	Brittany Murrell, Clinical Psychology Intern Katelyn McClelland, Social Work Intern Theresa Clayton, Billing Specialist Kayla Miller, Early Interventionist/Developmental Specialist Stephanie Johnson, Early Interventionist/Social Worker
Reach	Kelly Tousley, MS ECSE Intern Heidi Johnson, Speech Language Pathologist
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation	Jennifer Bennis, Developmental Specialist
Kodiak Area Native Association	Patti Studley, Developmental Specialist

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NEW to the WORLD

Congratulations to proud parents Kelly and Nathan Coutsoubos!



Emmy Rose Coutsobos

Born: December 5, 2014

Weight: 8 lbs 10oz

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"The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side." - Margaret Carty

Shilan Wooten | shilan.wooten@alaska.gov

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program | DHSS/Office of Children's Services

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