The *Up to 3* Times

Family Grows Together Through BabyNet Experience

Suzan Albright, M.Ed.

Angela Porter's young family was already facing some tough challenges when her baby, **Zachai-Jasmine**, was identified as having delays in multiple areas of development. That is when some very special people from BabyNet entered their lives. "God plants people in my life, and BabyNet is part of that," Angela believes.

Working Together

During the past year, two BabyNet service providers have helped to plan and implement the early intervention program through Angela's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). **Travia Levine-Myers** of the Orangeburg County Disabilities and Special

Together at home **Zachai-Jasmine** (age 2) and her big brother, **Jeremiah** (age 3), play while learning skills that will help them to be ready for success in school.

Needs Board provides service coordination and special instruction. **Nikki Carr**, of Pro-

fessional Therapy Services, LLC delivers speech-language therapy services. Although

these two IFSP team members usually visit the family at different times, they work in concert with one another. "I speak with Nikki by phone regularly to coordinate activities," says Travia. Nikki agrees that regular communication with Travia about what they are working on is critical to success. Each of them maintains a family-centered focus that involves designing strategies to build upon the skills and abilities of all the family members in supporting Zachai's development. Angela attests that, "It has been a real team effort," and she feels that involving eve-

Including Siblings in Intervention Activities

Lily Nalty, M.A., CCC-SLP

We know that early intervention focuses on parents and other adult caregivers who learn strategies to facilitate their child's development in everyday routines and places. But we sometimes forget that

brothers and sisters can also play an important role.

Next time you take part in developing an IFSP or family training plan, consider….

Discussing siblings -

Providers can ask questions

about siblings during assessments, especially related to what happens in everyday routines. Involving brothers and sisters in assessment in other ways, such as observing interactions, can help with gathering

Family Grows Together Through BabyNet (continued)

ryone has benefitted the entire family.

Playing Together

Watching Zachai progress and develop has been rewarding for Angela. Through BabyNet, she has learned how to observe her children's development and has gained parenting skills that benefit all four of her children. She recalls that in the past conflicts often occurred between Zachai and her brother **Jeremiah** (age 3). Now she says, "Zachai is trying to be like the older brother, Jeremiah. They like to take turns now. It's great watching those tender moments when they interact."

Big brothers are a big part of Zachai's natural environment. So, the BabyNet service

providers even help brothers, **Kevin** (age 10), **William** (age 8) learn to play with her in ways that promote her development of social and language skills. For instance, Zachai needed more opportunities to learn to imitate sounds. Nikki noticed that the boys enjoyed playing with toy animals and vehicles. "I tried to give them examples of how they could use their play with those toys to encourage Zachai to make those sounds, too," Nikki explained.

Growing Together

Angela is grateful for the many ways that Nikki and Travia have assisted her family through some "tough, trying times". Along the way, the BabyNet service providers have helped her access various resources

and supports to address her concerns. Angela has a message of gratitude to Travia and Nikki and the BabyNet program: "We needed you, and you were there! And we are forever blessed because of your service and availability to us. Again, thank you!!" ☼

A *TECS Tip of the Hat* to BabyNet service providers **Travia Levine-Myers** of Orangeburg DDSN and **Nikki Carr**, of Professional Therapy Services for their outstanding family-centered practices. Nice work, Partners!

Including Siblings in Intervention Activities (continued)

DID YOU KNOW THAT…

-Regardless of type or severity of disorder or delay, siblings tend to have a positive relationship with one another. They watch TV together, play games, ride in a car, eat, and more.

-By interacting with their brother or sister, children with special needs can learn new skills, such as how to communicate, play, or interact (for example, how to take turns and how to share) in everyday activities.

--Siblings can sometimes encourage positive behaviors when others cannot.

-Siblings of children with speech-language concerns are known to play an important part, "particularly in relation to interpreting the needs of the child with… speech impairment in situations where parents may not" be available, such as at school (Barr et al., 2008).

-Teaching siblings specific skills can impact a child's communication development. For example, teaching older siblings of children with Down syndrome in responsive interaction strategies can result in improvements in communicative abilities of children with Down syndrome.

-It is important to have IFSP goals for siblings (just as for parents and child with special needs), since IFSPs that have goals for siblings tend to have more siblings who are actually involved in IFSP services. But always ask siblings if and how they would like to be included. ☼

information about needs that can be used for IFSP goals and family training plans.

Interviewing siblings - Team members can learn about favorite activities, people, toys, games, TV shows, play routines, foods, and other things to include to help encourage progress on IFSP goals. From siblings, providers might learn ideas on ways to increase: turn taking; imitation, higher level language, comprehension of what is said or required;
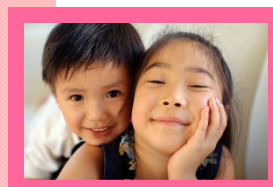
communication to interact with others, play with toys and peers, effective eating skills, and more.

Planning on helping families know how to explain their child's disability to a sibling if that is a need – Siblings tend to want to know more about their brother's or sister's disability. It can be helpful to offer families developmentally appropriate information and community resources.

Helping families learn about age-appropriate activities for young siblings to do together – these can include summer camps, puppet shows, skits, games, library and art events.

Helping families be aware of "…feelings and experiences of siblings of children with speech [and other] impairment, such as jealousy, resentment, worry, less parental attention, and the protective strategies that siblings employ to accommodate the needs of the child" with special – Parents can become aware of added responsibilities or difficulties that siblings may be having with added responsibilities or roles. Parents can choose to give siblings opportunities to discuss how they feel and their concerns and to consider sibling support groups if that is a possibility. ☼

Information in this article was adapted primarily from ASHA Language Speech and Hearing Services in the Public Schools (Barr et al., 2008), and Topics in Early Childhood Special Education (Kresak et al., 2009). References available upon request.

Free On-line Resources:

Sibling Support Project

http://www.siblingsupport.org/ publications/what-siblings-would-like-parents-and-service-providers-to-know

Sibling Issues

http://www.nichcy.org/ familiesandcommunity/pages/ siblingissues.aspx

TECSBOOK Users Evaluate Online Experiences

Stephanie Hicklin, B.S.

TECSBOOK is the name of the online learning management system (LMS) for BabyNet personnel. The system, which was launched in March 2009, is a critical component of South Carolina's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development for Part C early intervention. The LMS includes both training content and assessments of knowledge in Core Competency areas required for the South Carolina Part C Credential. TECSBOOK also incorporates an evaluation process which is designed to survey each user's experience with the LMS in two general areas: (1) Format and Technology, and (2) Content. Now that the system has been in place for over a year, TECS has analyzed and summarized data from the evaluations.

Evaluation Results

As of April 20, 2010, more than 450 BabyNet personnel had begun the TECSBOOK curriculum. That number represents about 25% of all BabyNet personnel required to complete the chapters. Evaluation results indicate that most users find the content offers a great review of information that they had previously learned. Many users commented that the content helped them to better understand topics and practices that had previously been confusing. Users reported that they gained new insights as a result of completing TECSBOOK chapters. Common concerns that users had dealt with the software used to deliver TECSBOOK and the process of downloading lessons and assessment files. Other common concerns were related to participation requirements and the rationale for TECSBOOK training.

Table 1 and Table 2 below summarize data captured during the first year of TECSBOOK evaluations.

TECS' Responses to Findings

In response to a variety of sources of feedback, TECS is taking several actions to make the TECSBOOK a more user-friendly and effective system. First, TECS recently developed and posted on its website an FAQ document to address the most commonly asked questions about the LMS system.

Based on test results, evaluation data, and technical assistance history, strengths and weaknesses in the system have been identified. Future revisions and improvements to the LMS are being planned. Users will continue to receive credit for completed chapters regardless of revisions to TECSBOOK. For all BabyNet personnel who were in the system by March 1, 2009, all 8 chapters that are currently posted on the TECSBOOK webpage are still due for completion by September 30, 2010.

BabyNet system personnel can expect revisions to TECSBOOK to be announced through the TECSInfo listserv and to be published on the TECS website as new information is prepared for release. ☼

TABLE 1—Format and Technology

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		317 users
Users' Guide is easy to download and is helpful.	Player and files are easy to download.	Appreciate the 24/7 availability.	This is my first online learning experience.	Navigating TECSBOOK book is straight-forward.
20% / 80%	26% / 74%	7% / 93%	54% / 46%	16% / 84%

TABLE 2— Content

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		130 users
This content was new to me.	The narration was helpful.	The content is relevant to my role.	The content helps me to do my job.	I have learned something new.
56% / 44%	30% / 70%	18% / 82%	31% / 69%	16% / 84%

Team for Early Childhood Solutions
Center for Disability Resources
University of South Carolina
School of Medicine/Department of Pediatrics
Columbia, SC 29208

Phone: (803) 935-5227
Fax: (803) 935-5335
leah.perry@uscmed.sc.edu.com

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

TECS
TEAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SOLUTIONS

TEAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SOLUTIONS (TECS)

As a program of the Center for Disability Resources, the Team for Early Childhood Solutions (TECS) is responsible for various activities related to South Carolina's statewide system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. These include:

Managing the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) for South Carolina's Part C early intervention system (BabyNet).

♦ Maintaining the database for the BabyNet System Personnel Credential, to assist the Part C lead agency in ensuring that providers of early intervention services meet the state's personnel standards.

♦ Researching and reporting information on Child and Family Outcomes that measure the efficacy of early intervention efforts in South Carolina, to assist the BabyNet system lead agency in meeting federal reporting requirements.

For further information and a copy of TECS' brochure, please TECS

Technical Support for Early Intervention Services in South Carolina

Why Say Anything? A Look at Communication Systems that Stimulate Language

Carol A. Page, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, ATP and Patricia D. Quattlebaum, MSP, CCC-SLP

Small children who depend on augmentative communication systems typically rely on others to help them make choices about what communication device, book, or environmental display is available during the day. These decisions begin with an in-depth review of a child's daily routine. The activities a child is engaged in during typical activities provide wonderful motivating opportunities for communication and conversation.

The basic goals of an in-depth interview about the daily routine are to determine a) what the child is doing to participate in routines and b) what the child likes to do. The following example illustrates one method of reporting these results:

Daily Routine

Ms. Smith was interviewed about the typical daily routine in order to learn more about the types of communication symbols John is using at home. She described a typical school morning as follows:

7:00 a.m.: Ms. Smith walks into John's room to wake him up. He will sit up and look around briefly.   Then he will look at his mother, make eye contact and smile. Ms. Smith helps him get off of his bed. Then he takes her hand to lead her to the bathroom. Ms. Smith puts him on the toilet. John wears pull-ups. He does not indicate that he wants a clean pull-up. He will take his pull-up off later in the day, but he does not usually do this first thing in the morning. Ms. Smith washes his face and brushes his teeth. John

can provide some assistance with this.

7:15 a.m.: Ms. Smith gets John dressed. His father selects his clothes for him. John can assist with parts of the dressing routine.

7:20 a.m.: John goes downstairs on his own. He will get a banana or some grapes for himself. When Mrs. Smith comes into the room, she will offer him something to eat. If he does not want what she has offered, he will begin pointing to things. He will push items away until he gets what he wants. If John wants more, he repeats the same routine of pointing toward the cabinet that has what he wants. John walks away when he is finished.

7:40 a.m.: When John sees everyone going to the door, he gets his jacket and goes to the door. After they arrive at school, he will occasionally wave goodbye.

John's parents provided the following list of activities and objects he likes: bathing/water play, swinging, sliding on the slide, walking around holding objects, fruit, chicken nuggets, fries, and running.

This review of the routine showed that John uses eye contact and smiling to interact with family members. He can point to show that he knows where his favorite foods are kept, and he makes selections by pushing away objects/foods that he does not want. The interview also revealed that there are some additional opportunities for increasing John's communication skills. For example, pauses could be used to encourage him to signal that he knows what is coming next in a routine, and he could be encouraged to do more choice-making when objects and photos are pre-

sented to him.

The following expressive language communication systems were recommended for John to use initially:

-A clothing choice communication board to be kept in the bedroom.

-A food choice communication board to be kept in the kitchen.

-A bath toy and bath activity communication board to be kept in the bathroom.

-A photo communication booklet that clips onto John's belt loop that includes motivating vocabulary for playing on the playground, fast food choices, social words such as "hello," "goodbye," "fun," "like," "don't like," "more," and "all done."

Additional communications supports that focus on receptive language skills may be used:

-Visual schedule for bathroom routines.

-Visual schedule for dressing.

The systems mentioned above are examples of low tech communication systems, which are typically easy to make, easy to modify and inexpensive. Remember, some children have difficulty comprehending the meaning behind graphic communication symbols. Try providing photographs or objects if they do. ☼

References are available upon request.

For more information, visit the SC Assistive Technology Program website: *http://www.sc.edu/scatp/index.htm*