



Disability? Delay? Disorder? Or Difference?

What do we see as the child's strengths?

- What is the child currently doing?
- What developmental milestones or past expectations were met?
- What do we and other familiar caregivers see as the child's "natural" gifts, contributions, and talents?
- What protective factors are supporting the child's growth and development (internal and external)?
- Other: _____

Can we dig deeper into the concern?

- What is our underlying concern (reason for referral, presenting issue)?
- How is this concern impacting the child, the family, and the classroom or other community settings?
- What is the desired outcome we are striving for?
- What is our hope for the future? If we were to image a time without this concern, what would it look like and how would we feel?
- What solutions are we seeking (realistic and hopeful)? Are there different solutions we see given our points of reference?
- Is there a fear behind or underlying the concern? Can we tell if there is "shark music" playing?
- Other: _____

What do we "know for sure"?

- What have we experienced (seen, heard, felt)?
- What do we see as risk factors or other barriers that seem to be in the way of the child's learning and development? Risk factors can be internal or external, controllable or out of the team's control.
- What do we fear if a particular action isn't taken?
- What data do we have to inform our next step (e.g., screening data, classroom observations, conversations with others)?
- What other agencies are involved or may need to be involved?
- What have been key past experiences for the child (e.g., has the child been exposed to stress or trauma, has the child had exposure to same age peers, has the child received therapy or interventions in the past)?
- Other: _____

To what extent are the following statements true?

Educational environment

- Developmentally appropriate toys and materials are readily available/accessible for the child to choose from
- Daily experiences are designed, delivered, and revised based upon the child's current abilities and interests
- Isn't too over/underwhelming
- Isn't too restrictive/chaotic
- Other _____

Educational team members

- Clear sense of the child's individual needs
- Strong knowledge of typical development and learning progressions
- Set expectations based upon the variability of when children acquire skills
- Ensure strong relationships, predictability, and external regulation before expecting child to be internally regulated
- Understand that cultural differences may impact when skills emerge or are mastered, including issues around social dialect
- Understand socio-economic differences and how they may impact when skills emerge and/or are mastered
- Understand how early childhood stressors impact development and learning
- Enforce developmentally appropriate rules/expectations
- Consistently create engaging activities
- Make instructional decisions based upon authentic/trustworthy data
- Provide timely, specific, and targeted feedback
- Celebrate children's success
- Encourage and demonstrate a growth mindset
- Deliver evidence-based instructional strategies during daily activities
- Differentiate instruction to support a wide variety of abilities
- Deliver universally designed instruction
- Other _____

Before the team heads to suspected disability, do one final check

- Is the child young and given all the pressures around us, maybe we're rushing development and learning?
- Is the child's temperament and behavioral repertoire a match at home and within their community, but the "cultural norms" and "school-based" expectations make the child appear to be behind or in some way delayed?
- Does the child prefer to do things in a different way or at a different pace but not in a way that is too rigid, it's just different and perhaps off putting in the current educational environment?
- Is the child struggling but has the foundational or prerequisite skills? For example, the child struggles with some demands from a classroom environment (e.g., playing cooperatively, demonstrating impulse control, following directions, meeting own needs) but has the foundational skills in terms of play, self-regulation, comprehension, cause and effect, etc.
- Did the child previously fall into the "monitoring" category of the developmental screener administered, and we need to screen again and/or continue to monitor?
- What is the child's pattern/rate of learning in other areas?

Sentence starters for getting to the heart of a concern/referral

1. What are your expectations?
2. What are you hoping will be the result?
3. What questions do you have about _____?
4. What is the hardest part about _____?
5. What is the easiest part about _____?
6. Did you learn something from a prior experience that feels useful now?
7. Could you say more about what _____ means to you?
8. How would finding a solution make you feel?
9. When have you encountered a similar issue?
10. If you were using a roadmap to navigate _____, what would be on your map
– the rest stops, the destinations, the detours?
11. OTHER _____