ANALYZING PATTERNS

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING


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Patterns of strengths represent consistent indicators that the child’s development, relative to a specific skill, behavior, or domain, is “on target”, and concerns and/or more intensive interventions are not warranted.

All children and families have patterns of strength. All too often, however, when identifying patterns, teams look for problems or deviations from what is expected vs. strengths.

Identifying patterns of strengths on the other hand, can help determine how to best to support families and children.

A child’s strengths should be identified by considering their age, developmental readiness, cultural expectations, and response to initial learning opportunities.

Examples of strengths include:
• Level of independence (defined differently for each child) and ability to work on their own to complete tasks, to get needs met, and to participate in daily routines and activities.
• Degree of flexibility in terms of starting and stopping actions, what they play with, what they eat, who they interact with, and times when they are redirected.
• Degree of adaptability to situations and/or circumstances. In other words, the child can adapt to increasing challenges or demands, changes in the environment, and differences in expectations.
• Ability to demonstrate selected, desired, and generative skills. For example, when the child is able to demonstrate competence on early learning standards and/or perform skills across time based upon the context and differences in materials.

Patterns of strength demonstrate what a child knows and can do. Strengths provide a clear signal about where to build from and how best to support a child and their family. Being aware of our own strengths and the strengths of those we interact with and serve, is a sign of emotional intelligence.
Development and learning during the early years tends to follow predictable sequences: developmental and pedagogical.

A developmental sequence is a generally agreed-on order in which children acquire skills. Think fist, second, third...earlier milestones to later milestones.

A pattern of unexpected performance is when a child is not able to perform skills that should have emerged earlier in development. For example, the child is four years old and is beginning to use objects in functional ways.

A pedagogical sequence takes into account how skills can emerge concurrently and are comprised of many pieces, some of which are simpler and easier, and others that are complex and harder.

A pattern of unexpected performance is if a child is able to perform some of the skills in a sequence (e.g., some aspects of participating in group activities), but struggles with a component. Or the child struggle with easier prerequisite skills.

Children who are sequential language learners may exhibit a pattern of unexpected performance. For example, they may appear to have more advanced language because they have memorized key phrases, while at the same time, appear to have a delay because of the number of words they use.

Children with disabilities may also demonstrate patterns of unexpected performance (i.e., splinter skills). For example, a child may be able to perform skills expected of their age in some developmental areas (or may even be advanced in certain areas), but due to their disability, they may be missing foundational or earlier skills in other areas.

Patterns of unexpected performance represent instances in which a child is missing a skill that should have emerged earlier in development or demonstrates some easier or prerequisite skills and some harder and more complex skills that should be developing concurrently (at the same rate and degree of difficulty).
Patterns of quality often emerge when you find yourself saying or using the word “too.” For example, when a child moves too quickly, or too slowly, it grabs our attention.

When a child is too friendly, or too withdrawn, we tend to make note and then describe the quality of their performance.

Sometimes quality can be thought of as how much intensity accompanies a child’s behavior...too much or too little force/effort.

Patterns around quality can also include concerns with intelligibility of expressive language.

Patterns of quality don't automatically suggest a concern; rather, teams need to consider whether or not they are interfering with interactions, physical health, and/or learning future concepts and skills.

Patterns of lack of quality represent instances where the child demonstrates a concept or skill in a unique way.
Assistance alone does not warrant concern because assistance might be expected based on what is known about developmental expectations.

Furthermore, assistance is not merely presenting a prompt, cue, or reminder.

Assistance here refers to an adult or peer having to complete part or most of the common outcome for the child. While some level of assistance is commonly required for all children who are learning a new skill, the amount for assistance should decrease over time.

When children need assistance beyond what would be expected of a novice learner, beyond the child's age/present level of ability/developmental readiness, beyond cultural differences, and/or beyond a lack of prior exposure, assistance can emerge as a concern.

For example, a child who is four years old needs reminders of how to follow a familiar social routine, or a child who is five years old, needs help from adults to manipulate objects.

Patterns of assistance represent instances in which objects from the environment and/or people have to complete part or all of the task/response for the child.
Not all interfering behaviors are aggressive or purposeful; however many times they are (e.g., hitting, biting, throwing).

At times, behaviors can interfere given that the child is unable to maintain or establish attention, walks away from interactions or tasks, or even outright refuses to participate.

By identifying patterns of interfering behaviors, teams can focus on supports and strategies that will help the child demonstrate more constructive responses such as being helpful, playing with friends, sharing, taking the perspective of others, and being adaptable to changing events.

Examples of interfering behaviors may include:
- Aggression (biting, kicking, screaming, hitting)
- Destruction (throwing, slamming, ripping)
- Repetition
- Distraction (skin-picking, others, sounds)
- Self-Injurious (head banging, self-biting)
- Arguing (outbursts, yelling)
- Refusal/Protest (pushing materials away)
- Ignoring
- Withdrawal
- Disengagement, complacency
- Lack of responsiveness and initiation

Patterns of interfering behavior represent instances when stressors cause a child to struggle with co-regulation, self-regulation and often results in the demonstration of non-desired responses (e.g., fight, flight, freeze, faint).
Patterns of time toward task are instances where the amount of time that passes from the directive or request to perform specific tasks, skills, or behaviors to the time the child demonstrates/initiates the required/desired tasks, skills, or behaviors is too long or too short.