



Birth–12 Months

Social-Emotional: Social Interaction Skills¹

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 1

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Initiates² and/or responds³ to communication⁴ with a trusted caregiver
- Participates in back-and-forth exchanges⁵ with a trusted caregiver

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, such as a mealtime or a diaper change; playtime; or during a guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Social-Emotional) are cited in parentheses.

Initiates and/or responds to communication with a trusted caregiver during

- infant or caregiver arrival or departure
- familiar care routines and transitions, such as diaper changing (Block 13, Options 1 and 2), handwashing (Block 13, Option 2), and transition to another activity (Block 13, Option 2)
- activities that involve music or movement (Block 1, Option 3; Block 16, Option 2; Block 20, Options 1 and 2)
- guided play with a toy, such as a soft rattle (Block 4, Option 1), toy animal figures (Block 21, Option 2), puppet (Block 5, Option 1), and doll (Block 15, Option 1)
- a book sharing (Block 5, Option 2; Block 16, Option 1; Block 21, Option 1)

Participates in a back-and-forth exchange with a trusted caregiver during

- open-ended communication initiated by a caregiver (Block 2, Option 1)
- guided play with a toy, such as blocks (Block 2, Option 2), ball (Block 2, Option 3; Block 11, Option 2), nesting cups (Block 17, Option 3), and toy musical instrument (Block 8, Options 1 and 2)



EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Initiates and/or responds to communication with a trusted caregiver

- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any infant communication toward you, such as gazing, smiling or vocalizing at you, or reaching toward you. (Your response may lead to a back-and-forth exchange with the infant.)
- Wave and say “hello” and “bye-bye” to the infant (and also the parent) during arrival and departure. Encourage the infant to wave to you.
- Repeat Block 1, Option 1 to encourage the infant to exchange sounds with you.
- Share a touch-and-feel book of interest to the infant. Invite the infant to feel different textures in the book. Describe and imitate the infant’s reactions (Block 5, Option 2).
- Describe your actions and the infant’s actions, including nonverbal communications, during care routines. See Block 13 activity options for suggestions.

Participates in a back-and-forth exchange with a trusted caregiver

- Repeat Block 2, Option 1 to promote a back-and-forth exchange of facial expressions, sounds, and/or actions.
- Repeat the Block 8, Option 1 or 2 activity involving a toy musical instrument to support a back-and-forth exchange.
- Repeat an activity that involves a toy of interest to the infant to support a back-and-forth exchange, such as Block 12, Options 1 and 2; and Block 17, Options 1–3.

Reinforce

Initiates and/or responds to communication with a trusted caregiver

- Offer a toy of interest to the infant to provide practice in initiating communication with you about the toy and/or responding to your descriptions of the toy and/or the infant’s interactions with the toy. Toy possibilities in ELM activity plans include toy animal figures (Block 21, Option 2), moving toy animals in muffin pans (Block 4, Option 3), a stacking ring toy (Block 12, Option 1), and baby doll (Block 15, Option 1), and nesting cups (Block 17, Options 1 and 2).
- Engage the infant in a book sharing that includes opportunities to initiate or respond to communications with you. Pictures of babies are of keen interest to most infants (Block 3, Option 1).
- Offer an activity that involves hand and arm actions, such as waving at a teddy bear (Block 6, Option 3) or hugging a baby doll (Block 16, Option 3). Include opportunities for the infant to use hands/arms to initiate communication with you as part of the activity.
- Sing a song in which you gently stop at key points to invite an infant response (Block 1, Option 3; Block 3, Option 3).



Participates in a back-and-forth exchange with a trusted caregiver

- Engage an infant in a game of *Peek-a-boo* to provide practice in a back-and-forth exchange. Imitate the vocalization and/or facial expression the infant may offer when you say “boo.”
- Invite an infant to join you in playing with a toy that supports back-and-forth activity, such as rolling a ball or pushing a car. Offer different types of toys, one at a time.
- Provide two puppets, one for you and one for the infant. Invite the infant to move his/her puppet as you move your puppet. Make and describe simple movements such as lifting, putting down, and side to side.

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Each day this past week Alejandro offered me a big smile when I joined the room in the morning. This is a new behavior. I always respond with a big smile and say his name. Now he coos or moves his legs or arms when I respond to him with a big smile and say his name. I will provide more opportunities for Alejandro to practice his social interaction skills.

Bridget likes me to “hide” my face and play Peek-a-boo with her. This is a good way for her to learn how to participate in a back-and-forth exchange with another person. I have been imitating the face and laugh she makes when I say “boo.” She laughs at me when I imitate her response to “boo.” This adds another exchange to our interaction. I will provide opportunities for Bridget to be the one who hides her face and says “boo.”

Endnotes

- 1 Behaviors to observe are informed in part by the following source: Bricker, D., Capt, B., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2002). *Assessment, evaluation, and programming system for infants and children, 2nd ed., Vol. 2: Test, birth to three years and three to six years*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- 2 An infant’s initiation of communication with a caregiver may include: gazing at the caregiver, smiling at or vocalizing to the caregiver, and/or reaching toward the caregiver (not in response to something the caregiver does).
- 3 Responses to a caregiver communication may include: gazing at the caregiver, vocalizing, smiling, kicking legs, reaching toward the caregiver, waving arm(s), moving or bouncing body.
- 4 A caregiver’s communication with an infant may include nonverbal messages, such as a smiling or patting an infant’s back or arm, and/or words and other types of simple verbal utterances, such as “Da-da-da-do.”
- 5 See p. 5 description of “serve and return” exchanges in the *ELM Curriculum User Guide: Birth–36 Months*.