

Anthony



Three-year-old Anthony and his family are behind on rent. They are facing possible homelessness and worrying they will run out of food. Many of these challenges can be linked to the difficulty Anthony's mother is having in finding steady employment. A consequence of these stressors may be seen in how Anthony's behavior has changed at his childcare. He has become more socially withdrawn and has begun hitting and punching other children and having tantrums.

What resources might support Anthony's family with housing and food? What resources might support Anthony's teachers to bolster all aspects of his learning and development, including helping him to self-regulate?

Taylor

The newest member of Miss Dorina's preschool classroom is Taylor, who is three years old and full of life. Balls, cars, and anything that makes noise are favorite play things for him. Until recently, Taylor received early intervention services at home. He has made terrific progress since he was first diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, but he still has significant delays in receptive and expressive language and social-emotional development.



When Taylor's mother, father, and grandmother met with Miss Dorina last week, they mentioned that he sometimes has difficulty interacting with adults, expressing his needs or feelings, and connecting with other children because of his language delays. His family also shared that Taylor is usually eager to interact with the other children but does so in ways that may be too rough and frightening to them.

Miss Dorina counts on Miss Laura, Taylor's speech-language pathologist, for ideas about supporting Taylor within classroom routines. Still, she finds herself wondering: How can I make my classroom welcoming and supportive for Taylor? How can I help Taylor to make friends and play with his classmates? And how can we all work together in ways that support Taylor and all the other children, too?

NOTE: This persona may be paired with *Assessing Opportunities to Support Each Child: 12 Practices for Quality Inclusion*, which appeared in the July 2019 issue of *Young Children*. The article shares episodes in the preschool life of Taylor and provides information about 12 evidence-based practices that Miss Dorina uses to support Taylor's learning and development.

Emerson

Emerson is three years old. She lives at home with her mother, father, and baby brother, Cody. Emerson loves the Disney princesses and the color pink. She also enjoys playing with baby dolls and loves giving them bottles, burping them, and taking them for rides in a toy shopping cart. Emerson is almost toilet trained and has a vocabulary of about 20 words or signs. Emerson is friendly and outgoing. She participates in morning meeting by clapping her hands to songs and imitating fingerplays.



Emerson also has Down syndrome which was diagnosed at birth. She receives specialized services, including occupational therapy and speech/language pathology from her local school district. While Emerson enjoys playing with the other children, she has difficulty following 1-step directions and has limited pre-academic skills (i.e., color naming, counting to 5, naming shapes). She has difficulty understanding how to ask a friend to play and doesn't really understand the concept of sharing toys.

Possible Uses:

- Use your state early learning guidelines/standards to see how Emerson's skill levels compare to other three year olds.
- Assess Emerson's skill level using Ages and Stages and/or HighScope Indicators.
- Identify home and classroom experiences that might be used to support Emerson's cognitive, language, and/or motor development within daily routines.

Josiah



Josiah is three years old and has a diagnosed disability in expressive language. He lives at home with his dad and paternal grandparents. Josiah's father and grandfather work full-time. Josiah's dad tries to play with him when he gets home from work, but reports that Josiah spends 3-4 hours a day watching TV or playing alone with the iPad. He does like to go to the park to play with his dad and is just learning how to kick a soccer ball.

Josiah usually points to things that he wants or needs, although he is learning to use sign language. His speech/language pathologist has recommended that Josiah have opportunities to engage with other children and that his teachers find reasons for him to use words to express what he wants. In school, you can frequently find Josiah in the block corner where he builds forts and fences for farm animals. He also spends quite a bit of time in the art area, painting or coloring with markers. During large group activities, he is generally quiet and does not participate in songs or answering questions that the teacher asks.

Possible Uses:

- Use your state early learning guidelines/standards to see how Josiah's skill levels compare to other three year olds.
- Assess Josiah's skill level using Ages and Stages and/or HighScope Indicators.
- Identify home and classroom experiences that might be used to support Josiah's expressive language development within daily routines.

Jamil

Jamil arrived a year ago with his mother, father, and older sister Sara from Syria. While Jamil is just four, he loves being involved in anything he can do with his six-year-old sister.

At home Jamil's family speaks Aramaic and Arabic but both parents are taking English classes. Based on concerns about Jamil's speech and language development, his pediatrician suggested that Jamil's language and social-emotional development would benefit greatly from a preschool program.

Jamil is now attending a local preschool program and is beginning to connect with other children and to communicate with his teacher and peers. He has developed a tremendous interest in blocks and builds tall and elaborate structures. Jamil's teacher has noticed that introducing and reinforcing concepts in a sequence (e.g., in a cooking activity) support both his receptive and expressive language.

To support carryover, Jamil's teacher has shared ideas about how to support his developing language skills at home. They've suggested games and routine activities that would be great ways to give him additional opportunities to practice his evolving language skills. His parents have expressed reluctance to do this as, they have shared, it is not customary in their family for adults to play with children.



Chooli

Chooli is four and new to a Title 1 preschool program. She has grown up in a home where the Navajo traditions are strong and passed down from generation to generation. Chooli means Mountain in Navajo.

Chooli lives with her mother and grandmother in a home filled with traditional Navajo images and music. At home and at school, she is described as someone who frequently paints and draws. She also helps her grandmother in the family garden.

When she's given a choice, Chooli always selects art activities. Even when she's playing outside she is often alone, drawing images in the dirt or sand. Her teachers report that she does not demonstrate interest in large motor activities or games.





Ramon

Ramon is four years old and lives with his mom, dad, younger sister Maria, and his abuela. Ramon is the child most likely to come in from the playground with some living creature. At home he takes care of the family pets, and in the classroom he frequently selects real, plastic, and stuffed animals to play with, especially dinosaurs.

Ramon is a sequential dual language learner. He speaks Spanish at home and has a 25 word site vocabulary. In his preschool classroom, Ramon is very quiet but watches intently to see what to do. He is picking up new labels in English every day.

Marcus

Marcus just turned 4 years old and loves to move. He is active and enjoys running and other large motor activities, even though his family and teacher agree that he falls down a lot. He lives with his mom and dad and his newborn baby sister. Both his parents work full time and he has been enrolled in a large, well-established full day child care center since he was 2 ½ years old. Prior to that, he stayed with his maternal grandmother.



Recent evaluations have revealed delays in speech and language that are significant enough to qualify him for early childhood special education services. In addition, a physical therapist noted that Marcus' muscle tone is mildly low, which may account for him falling and bumping into things.

At school, Marcus has little interest in classroom materials with the exception of the block area where he loves to knock down towers, whether he built them or his friends did. At home and at school Marcus has "meltdowns" when transitions interrupt his play. Marcus' speech-language pathologist says he has mild to moderate articulation delays, low expressive vocabulary, and sentences that are usually two to six words long. He frequently substitutes one word for another that sounds similar and then is frustrated when others don't understand what he said.



Alaina is a 4-year-old girl who lives with her mom, dad, and little brother. Alaina was born with bilateral, sensorineural, severe-profound hearing loss. This means she is deaf in both ears. At the age of 10 months, Alaina received cochlear implants which enable her to hear. Alaina and her parents were enrolled in their state's Early Intervention program from the time she was born to the age of three. Now Alaina receives early childhood special education services in an inclusive classroom with her peers. Her inclusion is supported through services she and her teacher receives from a Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (TOD) and a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP).

Alaina loves to play and is very social with her peers. She plays with all the children in her classes but also has special friends who she prefers. Her interests include play-doh, baby dolls, playing chase games outside, and anything pink! Alaina

is interested in books and has the attention to listen to long stories but sometimes has a hard time remembering all the details.

Often, because Alaina is very socially competent, it can be difficult to notice when Alaina is struggling in the daily classroom routines. She is able to follow other children's lead when she doesn't hear the directions or can't understand what is being said. Alaina's expressive language is very good but she sometimes is missing the beginnings or ends of words – especially softer sounds. In addition, it is difficult for Alaina to learn new words quickly.

Alaina is getting ready to transition to Kindergarten next year. Her mother and father are concerned about Alaina keeping up academically especially as things become more difficult. Alaina is not confident in asking for help and she can get lost in the shuffle. How can Alaina's teachers develop an IEP that will give Alaina the necessary supports to be successful in Kindergarten? What goals and strategies are important for Alaina?

Possible Discussion Questions

- If you were Alaina's teacher, what would you identify as important goals for her IEP to guarantee her continued success as a learner? For example, what evidence-based practices might support Alaina in learning to ask for help? What suggestions do you have for incorporating those goals in daily routines and activities in a kindergarten classroom? What practices or strategies might support those goals (e.g., peer supports)?
- When the goals, practices, and strategies you identified are implemented in Alaina's classroom, what might the possible benefits be for the other children in the class?



Jake

Jake is 4-1/2. He is an only child. He lives with his mother and father. His mother has some intellectual challenges. She takes very good care of Jake and sees that his clothes are clean and he is well fed. But she doesn't know much about how to support the learning and development of a preschooler. By report, Jake has never used crayons, held or read books, or spent time with other young children.

Jake's dad has had a difficult time finding work lately. The family has moved frequently as Jake's father has searched for work. Jake has spent time at home with his mother. Jake's father has recently found a new position that will, hopefully, allow the family a bit more financial stability. Based on concerns from Jake's grandparents, he was recently evaluated and now has an IEP to support his fine motor and social-emotional development. In addition, Jake has just started attending a Head Start program and his therapy services will be delivered in the classroom.

At school, the things Jake plays with are cars, trains, trucks – anything with wheels. He avoids doing fine motor activities. When he is asked to do fine motor activities like stacking small blocks, using scissors and crayons, or completing simple puzzles, he appears to get frustrated, but doesn't seem to be able to explain how he feels or why he's unhappy. His teachers report that he doesn't have any friends yet and hasn't mastered the concepts of sharing or turn taking.