

Module: Naturalistic Intervention

Case Study

Ella

Ella was a 30-month-old girl who had just been diagnosed with PDD-NOS. Her family had sought an evaluation upon recommendation from Ella's early intervention team. Ella had received services through early intervention since she was 18 months old because of delays in language development and limited play skills. Ella's therapists had been working with her parents to help them map language onto Ella's play and to provide lots of language-rich experiences for Ella, but she was still not increasing her expressive language use. At her IFSP meeting, Ella's parents reported that they really wanted to see her able to ask for what she wanted to eat rather than stand at the pantry and cry. The EI team decided that they could use naturalistic strategies to target this desired behavior. The team identified different times of the day that Ella wanted snacks and worked together to think of how they could use behavioral strategies to elicit these verbal requests. Ella's mom, dad, and older brother (who babysat for Ella each afternoon) all learned how to offer Ella a clear model. When she went to the pantry, they would get down at her level and say, "Say, crackers." Everyone understood that when Ella approximated the word, she would get a cracker. If Ella wanted a different snack, they could offer her a choice of two. When she reached toward the desired option, they would offer the verbal model. The team decided that the family could jot notes on a piece of paper on the fridge so that progress could be tracked. As Ella became more proficient at repeating the model the EI team was able to help the family learn how to use mand-models ("Tell me what you want, Ella") and modified time delay to elicit the request. In addition, the family independently started using these same techniques to have Ella request movies. The team agreed that having specific strategies to use, rather than just always labeling the snacks as they handed them to Ella, helped Ella make progress and was a better fit for her learning style.