

ICE *Lesson Plan*

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: SELF-FEEDING AND EATING



This lesson plan is designed to allow students to analyze typical self-feeding and eating patterns in early childhood.



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, the successful student will be able to:

1. Recognize age appropriate performance skills of self-feeding and eating in early childhood (infant-toddler)
2. Differentiate between typical and atypical patterns of movement, engagement, and sensory integration within a feeding session
3. Identify the impact of context and client factors on self-feeding in early childhood

This activity supports the requirements for:

- *The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy (ACOTE) standards B.3.2, B.3.6, B.4.16; B.4.18*
- *The Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Education Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology 3.1.4B, 3.1.5B*

LEARNING ACTIVITIES



Watch

Assign one or more of these videos for students to watch before, during, or after class:

- **Early Childhood Development: Jack Feeding/Eating (6 months).**
Jack is being fed pureed foods by a caregiver on a spoon.
- **Early Childhood Development: Jack Feeding/Eating (12 months).**
Jack uses both hands to feed himself a sandwich from a tray.
- **Early Childhood Development: Jack Feeding/Eating (14 months).**
Jack uses a utensil and his hands to feed himself multi-textured food from a tray.
- **Early Childhood Development: Jack Feeding/Eating (16 months).**
Jack uses both a spoon and his hands to feed himself yogurt and oatmeal from a bowl.
- **Early Childhood Development: Jack Feeding/Eating (23 months).**
Jack is feeding himself yogurt while sitting on a chair.

Have your students compartmentalize what they are seeing. For example, while Jack is eating, what is happening cognitively, interpersonally, and with his hands, etc.? Students may look at the video and not be able to isolate client factors.

NOTE: It is very important to let students know the *range of normal*. Just because this one child does it this way, doesn't mean there will be an issue if another has less attention, or looks a bit less coordinated.



Discuss

Pause the video often to *ask* students what they see instead of *telling* them what they see. Ask “unpacking questions” to stimulate small or large group discussions.

Pick a point in the video when Jack is performing a particular activity and ask related questions.

JACK FEEDING/EATING (6 MONTHS)

Discussion questions:

1. Why is it important to pay attention to the cues the child gives you when engaging in a feeding task? What do you notice about his body language, eyes, and overall vocal reactions? Why are these things occurring and what can be done about them, if anything?
2. How is the caregiver’s approach impacting Jack’s response? What could be done differently? What works?
3. Is Jack’s ability to clear a spoon age appropriate? What happens with his mouth once the food enters? Why?
4. What are safety precautions to be aware of?
5. At 00:17 in the video, Jack extends his back and arms after the food enters his mouth. Compare that to 01:26 in the video from the following day, where he brings the spoon toward his mouth and flexes his body forward and hands in.
 - a. What does this tell you about the importance and significance of flexion vs extension and “body language” of a nonverbal child?
 - b. If you only saw the first part of the video, what impression would you have clinically? What are some of the “clues” he provides (i.e. he had the food on his lips and mouth and he was fine, but puckered his lips and was clearly unhappy, maybe he was just tired, maybe he just didn’t like the food, etc.)? Why is it important to monitor a child over time and in different environments?
 - c. What did you notice about his body control and stability? Is this typical for his age? Compare this to the other two videos at 6 months where he is doing another activity? What do you notice about positioning and motivation as a factor?

JACK FEEDING/EATING (12 MONTHS)

Discussion questions:

1. Beyond his oral motor control, what do you see happening here? Why?
2. What does that say about his strength, bilateral coordination and motor control?
3. What other client factors are occurring here? Can you make any statements about other aspects of skill that aren’t directly related to the task he is completing?
4. At 01:15 in the video, Jack uses a pincer grasp to put a piece of the meal in his mouth.
 - a. Identify what is happening at this point. Have students explain the type of grasp and if this is expected behavior for his age/developmental level.

- b. How successful is he at using the pincer? Do you see him using it with the other hand in the video? Why is this important/relevant?
- c. What is happening with his mouth, cheeks, teeth and tongue during this experience? How is he managing the food? Why do you think he is babbling at the same time?
- d. What are the cultural factors that you notice which may be influencing the activity?

JACK FEEDING/EATING (14 MONTHS)

Discussion questions:

1. What is happening with his hands during the session? Do you notice anything consistent about grasp pattern? Why do his fingers splay at certain points and is this expected?
2. Compare this video to the video of Jack at 12 months? What specific differences and similarities do you notice in his oral and fine motor skills? Why?
3. Does this video tell you anything about Jack's hand dominance? Why or why not?
4. From 00:00-00:07 in the video, Jack uses a fork to place the food in his mouth, he clears the fork and clears his lower lip with his upper.
 - a. Identify what is happening at this point. Have students explain if his use of a utensil, and oral motor skill and coordination is expected behavior for his age/developmental level.
 - b. Why is the clearing of the bottom lip important? What does this tell you about his oral motor awareness and sensory processing? What other clues does the video give you about his oral skill (i.e. multiple texture food, size of bites, type of food, open cup?
 - c. How would the size/shape of the fork or food change the interaction? What would make it easier/harder?

JACK FEEDING/EATING (16 MONTHS)

Discussion questions:

1. What do you think is happening here? Why?
2. What does that say about his skill/developmental level?
3. What does the interaction he has with the food tell you about the values of his family?
4. At 00:48 seconds in the video, Jack switches hands while using the spoon. Some questions to ask:
 - a. Identify what is happening at this point.
 - b. Why? What is Jack's motivation?
 - c. Is this expected behavior given his age/developmental level?
 - d. What can you do, as a therapist, to facilitate bilateral coordination in another way?
 - e. What are factors in the environment that may influence the activity?

JACK FEEDING/EATING (23 MONTHS)

Discussion questions:

1. When Jack brings the spoon to his mouth initially he opens very wide. Why does he do this and what happens as the video continues? Why? What do you think about his lip and jaw control? Are these typical for his age?
2. What type of grasp(s) does he use on the spoon? What do you notice about his other hand when he is feeding himself? Why do you think his fingers splay?
3. What does the video demonstrate about his gross motor skill? What are the specific things you notice about his movement to indicate his skill?
4. At 01:16 in the video, Jack requests to “wash” his hands.
 - a. What does this tell you about his sensory processing and use of verbal skill? Is it typical? Why?
 - b. After he cleans his hand he brings it back to stabilize the glass container. What does this tell you about his bilateral coordination? What else do you notice about his bilateral integration? (is it symmetrical, asymmetrical, reciprocal? Do you see him cross the midline?
 - c. What could be done to encourage various levels of bilateral integration?
 - d. What could be changed in his environment to make this session more engaging? What components of his environment lend to success?

CLASS OR HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES

CREATE A VIDEO:

Compare/contrast Jack to other children by having students mirror the same activity with a child and video it.

SIMULATION:

Faculty member can ‘pretend’ to be a child who is having difficulty managing a spoon. Have the students problem solve methods of correction.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Identify the next expected phase in self feeding. How would you propose the primary caregiver encourage this next step?
2. What aspects of the environment are influencing Jack’s self-feeding? Identify some possible environmental barriers that could exist if Jack was in another household/setting.
3. If Jack were a few months older, what differences (if any) might you expect? What if the performance was the same? Would he be considered typical? If not, why not?
4. What client factors are influencing his participation in this session? How? Use the OT Practice Framework template to identify which areas can be identified specifically (i.e. emotional, muscle tone, sequencing, even values/beliefs of the family).



Resources for Faculty/Student Reading

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