

Blended Practices Case Study: Alice and Miguel

Alice was an early interventionist serving children in an urban area through visits to homes and community childcare centers. One of the children on Alice's caseload was Miguel, a 27-month-old boy who received early intervention services due to delays in cognitive and communication development. Miguel interacted well with other children and was easily motivated when engaged in child-directed play. He sometimes used single word utterances to get his wants and needs met but was inconsistent and often difficult to understand. Alice concluded that Miguel's limited verbal communication skills were keeping him from accessing and participating in the daily routine and that he needed more intensive instruction to learn the foundational skill of saying/ signing "more". Thus, Miguel's individualized outcome was to respond to directions, answer questions, or say/sign "more" to indicate when he needed or wanted "more" of something. Approximations were allowed.

After a brief Internet search and review of evidence-based strategies designed to promote communication skills, Alice selected the "mand model" procedure as an effective and efficient instructional strategy to teach Miguel how to request more. In general, the mand model procedure can be used when a child is learning words, learning to request, and/or learning to respond to questions. The basic premise of the strategy is for adults to give mands (e.g., give directions, make requests, ask questions, make statements) that require a verbal response from the child. Alice felt that this evidence-based strategy would be both effective and efficient for use with Miguel and in collaboration with the childcare staff decided to use the strategy during snack and free-play time.

Baseline data were collected for 2 days during snack and free play. During baseline (before Alice and the childcare staff started to use the mand model procedure), Miguel was given six opportunities (three during snack and three during free play) to say or sign "more." During baseline, he signed "more" only one time during snack. Because of Miguel's consistent nonresponding during baseline, Alice and staff decided to begin delivering the mand model procedure 10 times during snack and 10 times during free play. For example, during snack, a few goldfish were presented to Miguel. When he was finished eating the goldfish, Alice and the childcare staff waited to see if he would indicate the need for more by making an approximation or by signing or saying "more." Alice knew the opportunity was a match for using the mand model procedure because they waited until they had joint or mutual attention, which was on the empty plate. Then, when Miguel started looking from his plate to the box of goldfish crackers, a mand was delivered (i.e., Alice or the staff would say, "What do you want?" or "Say more"), and then would wait 3 seconds for Miguel to respond. If Miguel approximated or signed/said the word "more" after the mand, Alice affirmed by saying, "You want more crackers" and then gave him



more crackers. If he did not sign or say “more” after 3 seconds, Alice or the staff modeled by signing or saying “more” and then gave Miguel more goldfish crackers if he modeled an approximation of the sign or word for “more.” Following 4 days of intensive instruction during snack and free play, Miguel was signing or using the initial consonant (“m”) following the mand, 8 of 10 opportunities during snack, and 10 of 10 opportunities during free play.

The results demonstrate the importance of selecting the appropriate instructional strategy and ensuring that a sufficient number of embedded learning opportunities are provided. Prior to implementing the intensive instruction, the teacher had tried simply modeling the correct response for Miguel. However, the consistent delivery of the mand model procedure was needed in order for the child to learn an important foundational communication skill of saying/signing “more”.

“Blended Practices Case Study: Alice and Miguel” is based upon the work of Alicia Bachman, an early interventionist who lives and works in Kentucky. The case is adapted with permission from the following source:

Grisham-Brown, J., Pretti-Frontczak, K., Bachman, A., Gannon, C., & Mitchell, D. (2014). Delivering individualized instruction during ongoing classroom activities and routines: Three success stories. *Blending practices for all children (Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No.16)*. Los Angeles: Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

For an additional training resource, please see this YouTube video <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDmyKQpBn0E>>. In the video, Alicia describes the need to have clear and direct communication with community partners, and to identify observable and measurable child outcomes in order to deliver intensive interventions with fidelity.

Learn about other blended practice success stories in Young Exceptional Children's Monograph #16 <http://bookstore.dec-sped.org/>.

