

Successful Direction Following with an Active Child

- **Practice stop and go games** (ex. red light/green light) with a small group of children including target child to help him control running and hopefully help him to understand that he needs to stop sometimes. Actual red stop sign and a green light are good visual aids for this game. Be sure to say the words *stop* and *go* as you play. Make it fun then serious when needed for safety reasons.
- **Do a stop, think and choose process** – when she begins to run aimlessly around the room, have an adult stop her, help her to think of a constructive activity to choose, then guide her to that activity. The adult should stay with her for a short time guiding in the activity (starting with perhaps 1 minute and increasing as necessary).
- **Try to catch child during positive/helpful times and provide positive feedback.** Ex. *Wow, thank you for helping pick up the cars.*
- **Always provide words for what child is doing.** You're providing the dialogue for their thinking in a way. For example, you might say, *Sam is playing with play dough. Playing with play dough. Play dough.* Say it the first time as you normally would, then break it down two more times, the first with the 2 – 3 most important words, then again with one important word. Once he starts labeling more consistently, only go to the second step.
- **Model slow, enunciated speech at all times.**
- **Acknowledge, correct as needed, and expand upon what child says.** For example, she says, *Do-* for dog. You say, *Yes, A dog. A big dog.*
- **Give directions in small chunks of information.** Be sure that you have total attention when giving the direction – may want to be right next to the child or close by. For example, *time to pick up the toys. Sam pick up all the cars first.* Once he's picked up the cars, have him move to another item. Or have him put the cars into basket once he's got them in his hands.
- **Be wary of over-stimulating environmental factors.** Loud sounds or lots of visual activity may increase activity level. Perhaps the child needs a quiet space in the room or away from the other children to calm down. OR the child might need to bounce on a ball to release some energy before needing to focus on an activity. An occupational therapist may have good ideas for this.
- If child has difficulty sitting and listening during a circle activity, **consult an Occupational Therapist** to determine whether the child prefers 'light touch' or 'heavy touch'. Provide this during the circle so that the child can attend. Perhaps the child could stay better focused if she had a small, non-distractable toy to fiddle with in her hands.
- If possible, **try to give the child individual floor-time periods daily.** Likely it cannot be done often, but at least once a day try to have an adult play with him alone, encouraging communication and focus to the task.