
Parent Involvement in Early Intervention: Do We Strengthen Family Capacity To Promote Child Learning?

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Purpose

- Describe the foundations for parent involvement in early childhood intervention
- Describe the key components of a family capacity-building model and approach to early childhood intervention
- Illustrate the manner in which the key components of the model are conceptually and procedurally related
- Summarize findings from research on practitioner use of capacity-building practices and the extent to which these types of practices have expected consequences

Foundations for Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Intervention

- Early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities or developmental delays is premised on the assumption that parent-provided early intervention practices will increase the learning opportunities afforded young children
- Early intervention provided by professionals twice a week for 50 weeks in the absence of parent involvement accounts for less than 3-4 percent of a 2-year-old's waking hours

Capacity-Building Goal of IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Program

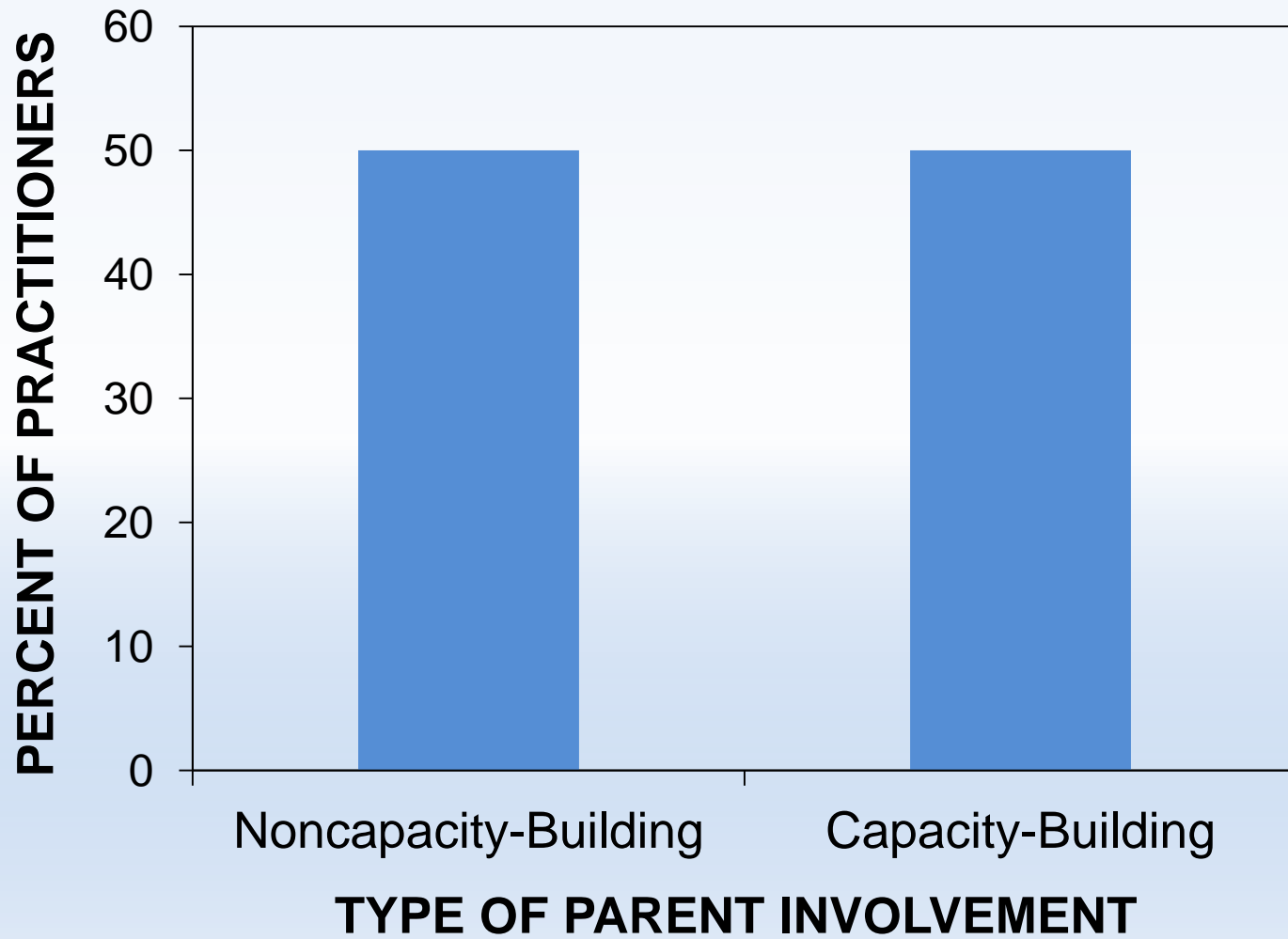
- Enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities in order to enhance the development of their children and to minimize their potential for developmental delays
- Neither the Part C statute nor the regulations, however, include any guidance or suggestions about how the capacity-building goal ought to be accomplished and, in fact, the prescribed practices are not consistent with the intent of the family capacity-building provision

Types of Parent Involvement in Part C Early Intervention

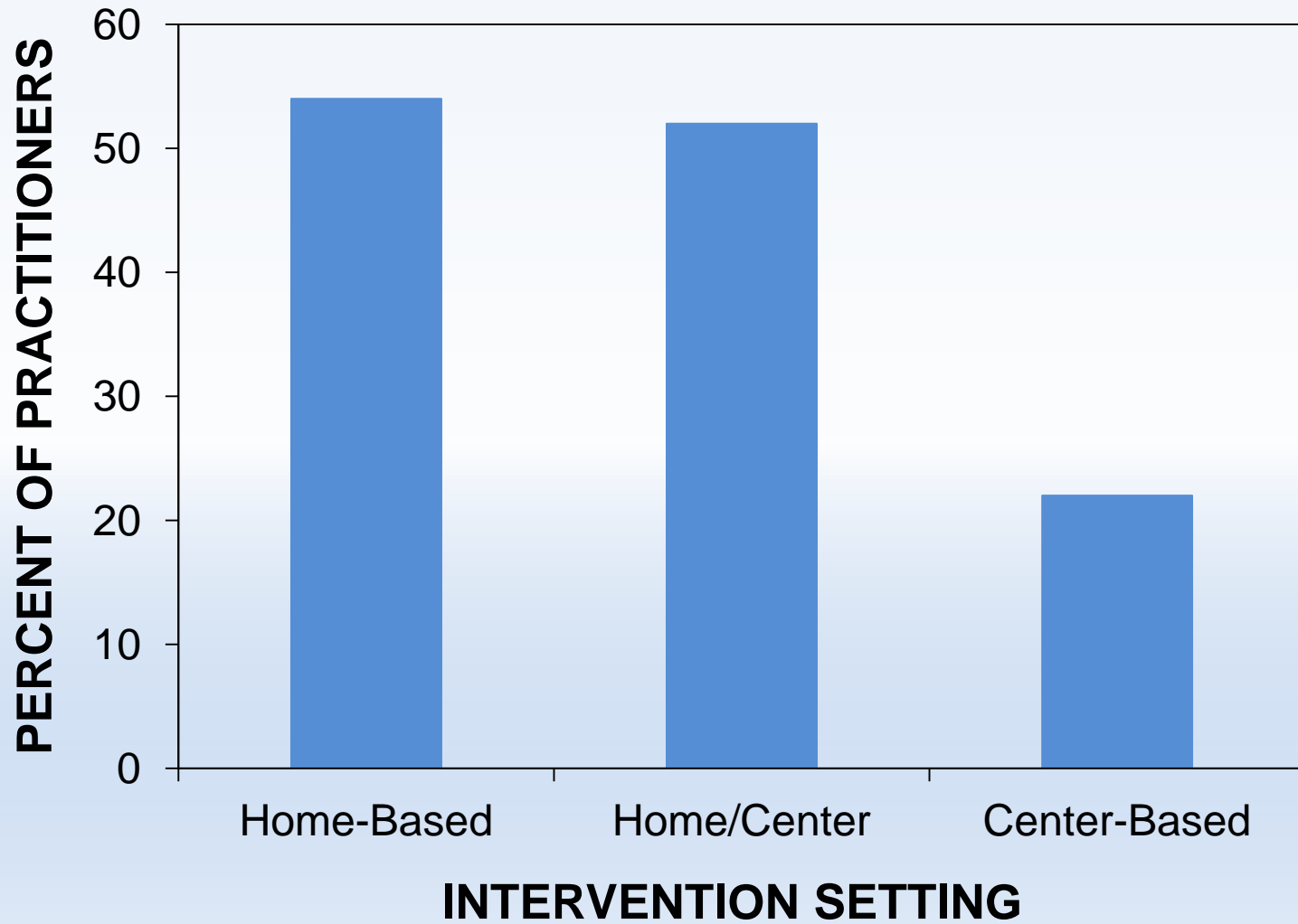
- As part of a national study of early childhood intervention practices, parents in 22 states were asked to describe the manner in which early childhood practitioners involved them in their children's early intervention
- Parents indicated their level of involvement on a five-point scale ranging from not present when a child received early intervention to actively engaged in providing early intervention to a child
- The parents' responses were analyzed in a number of different ways to determine the extent to which practitioners involved the parents in a capacity-building manner

Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., & Epse-Sherwendt, M. (2014). Family capacity-building in early childhood intervention: Do context and setting matter? *School Community Journal*, 24(1), 29-40.

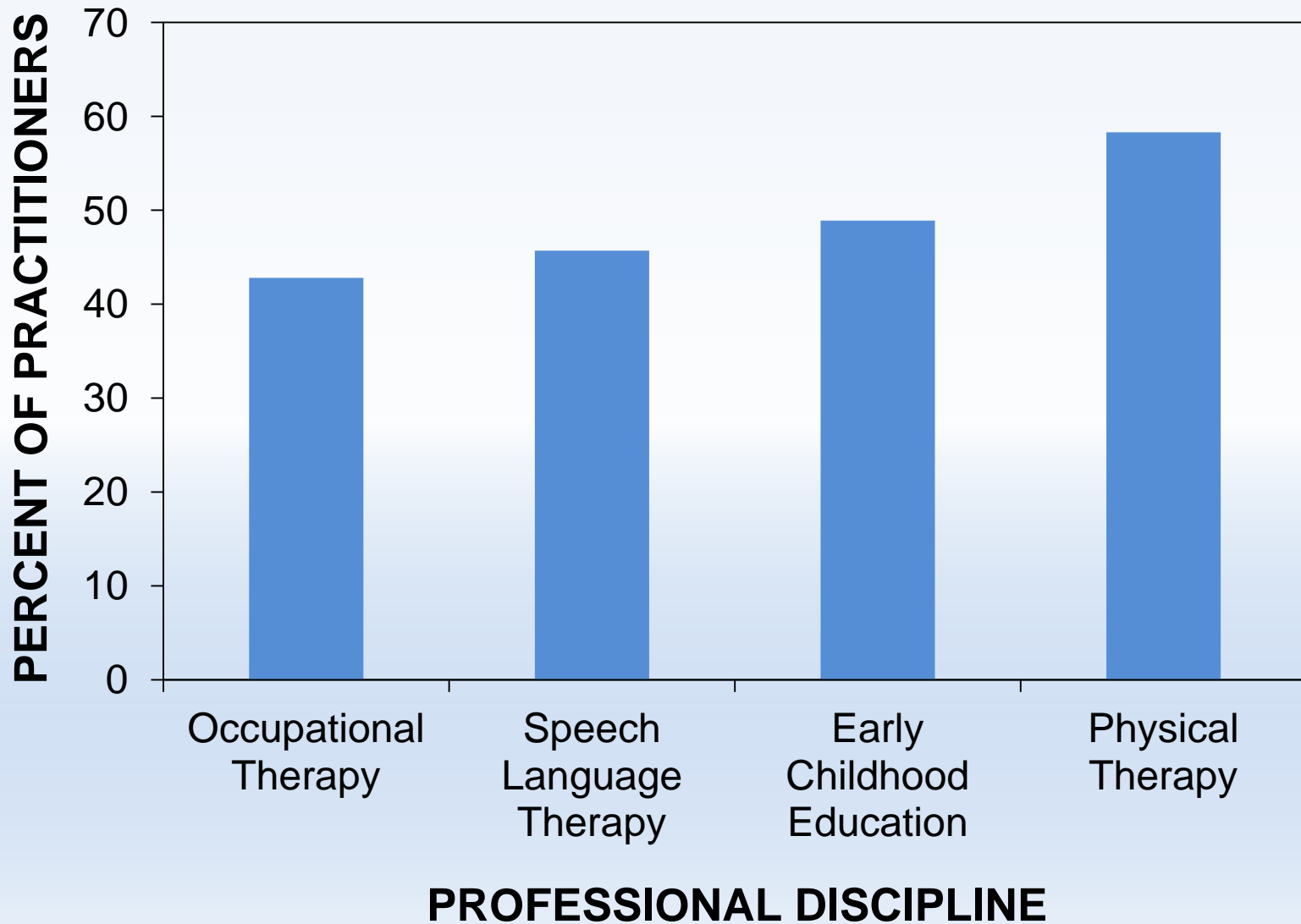
Distribution of Parents' Responses



Setting Effects



Discipline Effects



Early Childhood Intervention as We Now Know It

- Findings from our national study, together with evidence from other studies (N = 20+), indicate that the majority of parents are not actively involved in their children's early intervention
- Results from other studies show that when parents are involved, they are not involved in ways that will likely build and strengthen parenting capacity to promote children's learning

Research and Practice on Family Capacity-Building

- Several different lines of research and practice with parents and early childhood practitioners have focused on identification of the kinds of experiences and opportunities that are associated with capacity-building characteristics and consequences
- Results have been used to develop an approach to family capacity-building and to conduct research to test and evaluate basic tenets of this particular approach to early childhood intervention

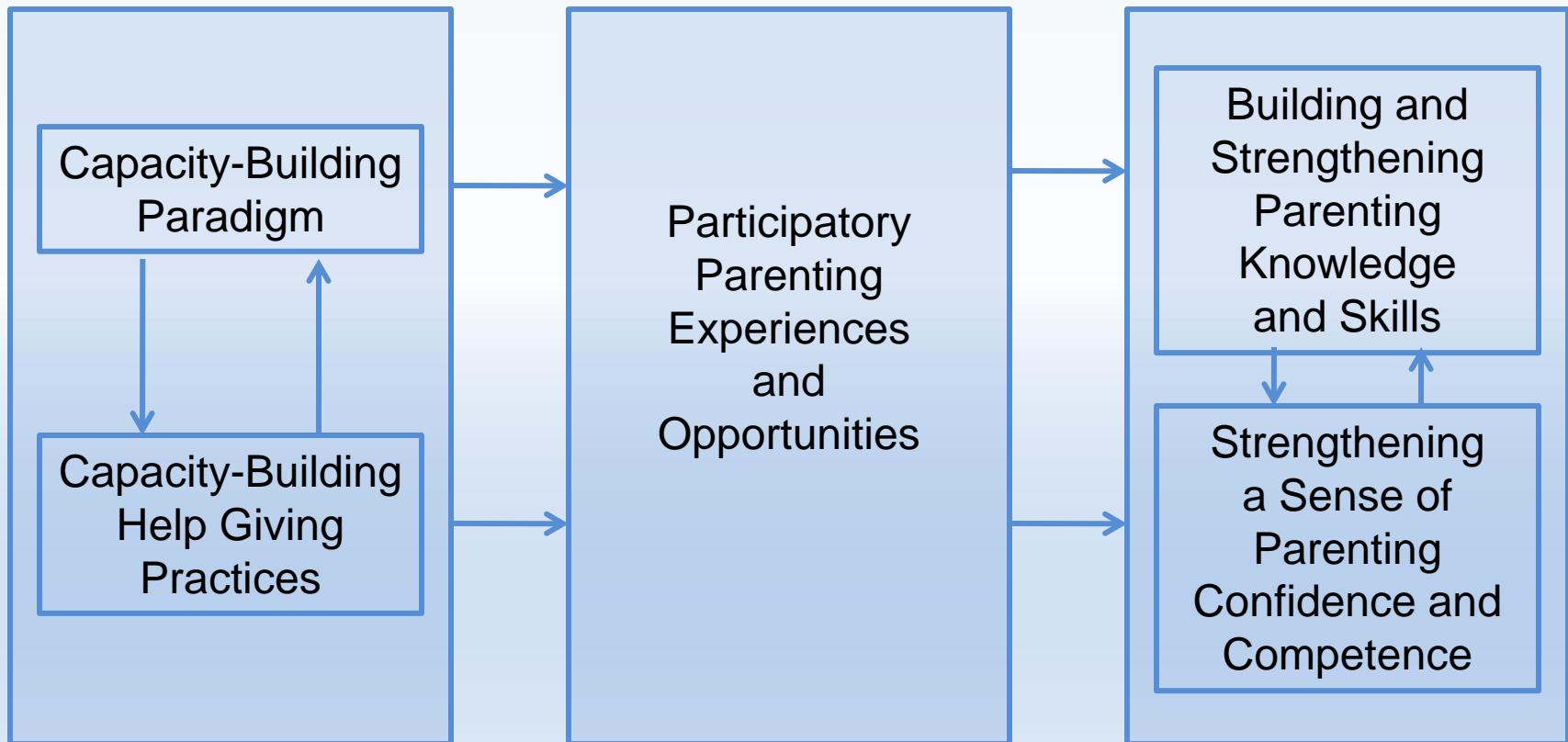
Definition of Family Capacity-Building

Family capacity-building refers to the methods and procedures used by early childhood practitioners to create or provide parenting opportunities and experiences to strengthen existing and promote the development of new parenting abilities in a manner that enhances and strengthens parenting self-efficacy beliefs

Four Elements of Capacity-Building

- Capacity-building as a model or paradigm for conceptualizing how early childhood practitioners work with families
- Capacity-building as a set of help giving practices that engage parents in participatory experiences and opportunities that build and strengthen parent and family capacity
- Capacity-building as parenting knowledge and skills for carrying out parenting responsibilities and promoting child learning
- Capacity-building as a sense of parenting competence and confidence (self-efficacy beliefs)

Relationships Among the Four Elements of the Capacity-Building Model



Contrasting Approaches to Early Childhood Intervention

Capacity-Building Models		Traditional Models
Promotion	vs.	Treatment
Empowerment	vs.	Expertise
Strengths-Based	vs.	Deficit-Based
Resource-Based	vs.	Service-Based
Family-Centered	vs.	Professionally-Centered

Dunst, C. J., & Trivette, C. M. (2009). Capacity-building family systems intervention practices. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 12(2), 119-143.

Parenting Capacity-Building Paradigm

Models	Main Focus
Promotion	Enhance and promote parenting knowledge and skills
Empowerment	Create opportunities that support and strengthen a sense of parenting confidence and competence
Strengths-Based	Build on existing parenting capabilities as the basis for promoting and strengthening new parenting skills
Resource-Based	Use a broad range of resources and supports for enhancing parenting capabilities
Family-Centered	Engage parents in participatory experiences and opportunities to strengthen and promote parenting knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy beliefs

Capacity-Building Help Giving Practices

Our research has consistently found that there are two clearly discernable kinds of practices that “fall into” distinct subcategories of help giving practices:

- Relational help giving practices
- Participatory help giving practices

Relational Help Giving Practices

Relational practices include behavior typically associated with effective help giving (active listening, compassion, empathy, etc.) and positive practitioner attributions about help-receiver capabilities.

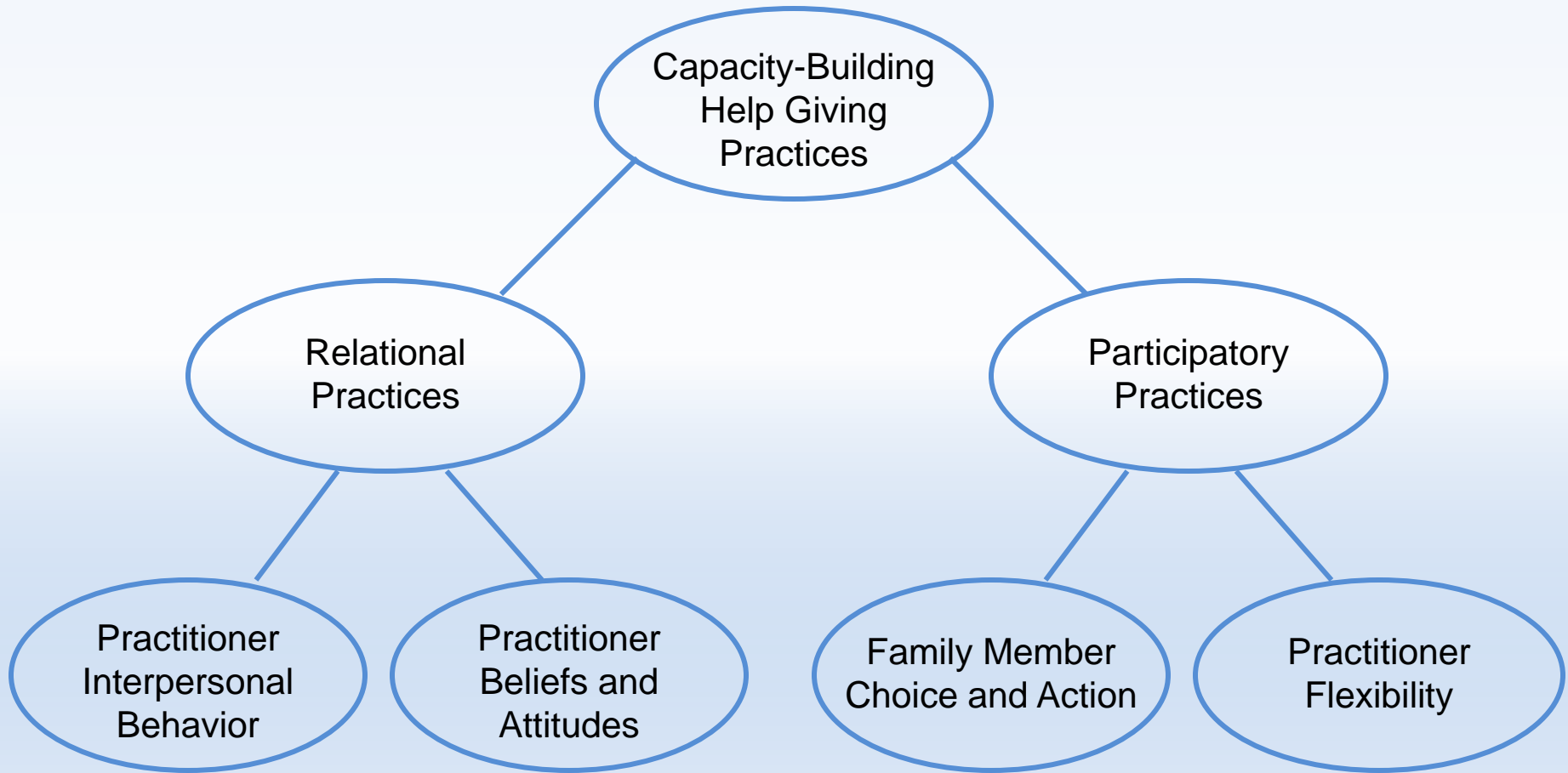
- These kinds of practices are often described in terms of behavior that strengthen program participant and practitioner interpersonal relationships (mutual trust, collaboration, etc.).
- Relational practices also include help-giver beliefs about existing family member strengths and their capacity to become more competent.

Participatory Help Giving Practices

Participatory practices include behavior that involve help-receiver choice and decision making, and which meaningfully involve participants in actively procuring or obtaining desired resources or supports for achieving desired life goals.

- These kinds of practices strengthen existing competencies, build capacity, and provide opportunities for learning new capabilities.
- Participatory practices also include help-giver responsiveness to a family's situation and changing life circumstances, and help-giver flexibility to these situations and circumstances.

Capacity-Building Help Giving Practices



Capacity-Building Parenting Opportunities

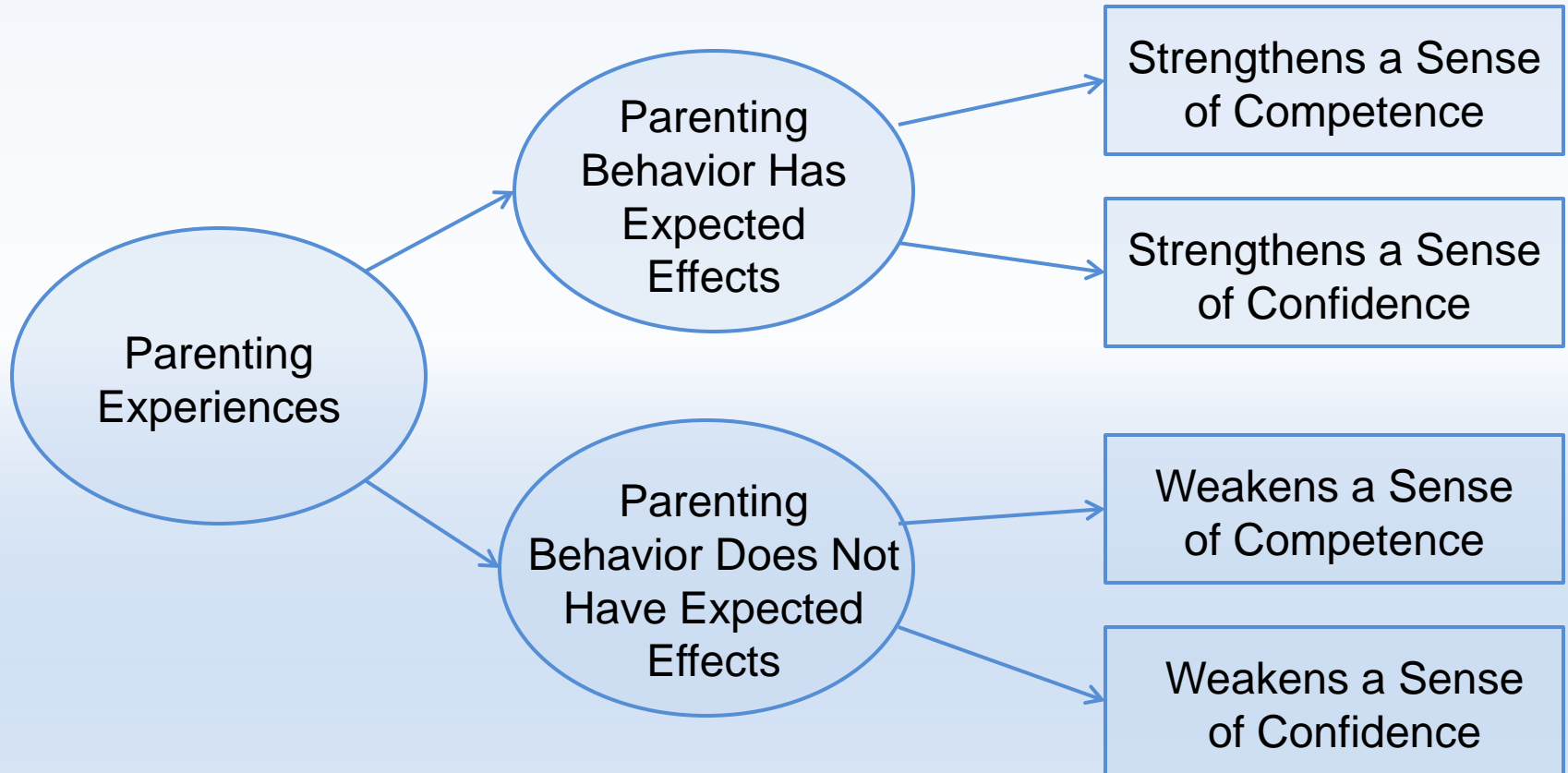
Parenting experiences and opportunities that actively involve parents in everyday, real life parenting activities are more likely to have capacity-building characteristics and consequences. These include, but are not limited to, a parent providing his or her child everyday learning opportunities to promote child development and the use of naturalistic teaching procedures to encourage and support child learning while engaged in everyday activities.

Building and Strengthening Parenting Confidence and Competence

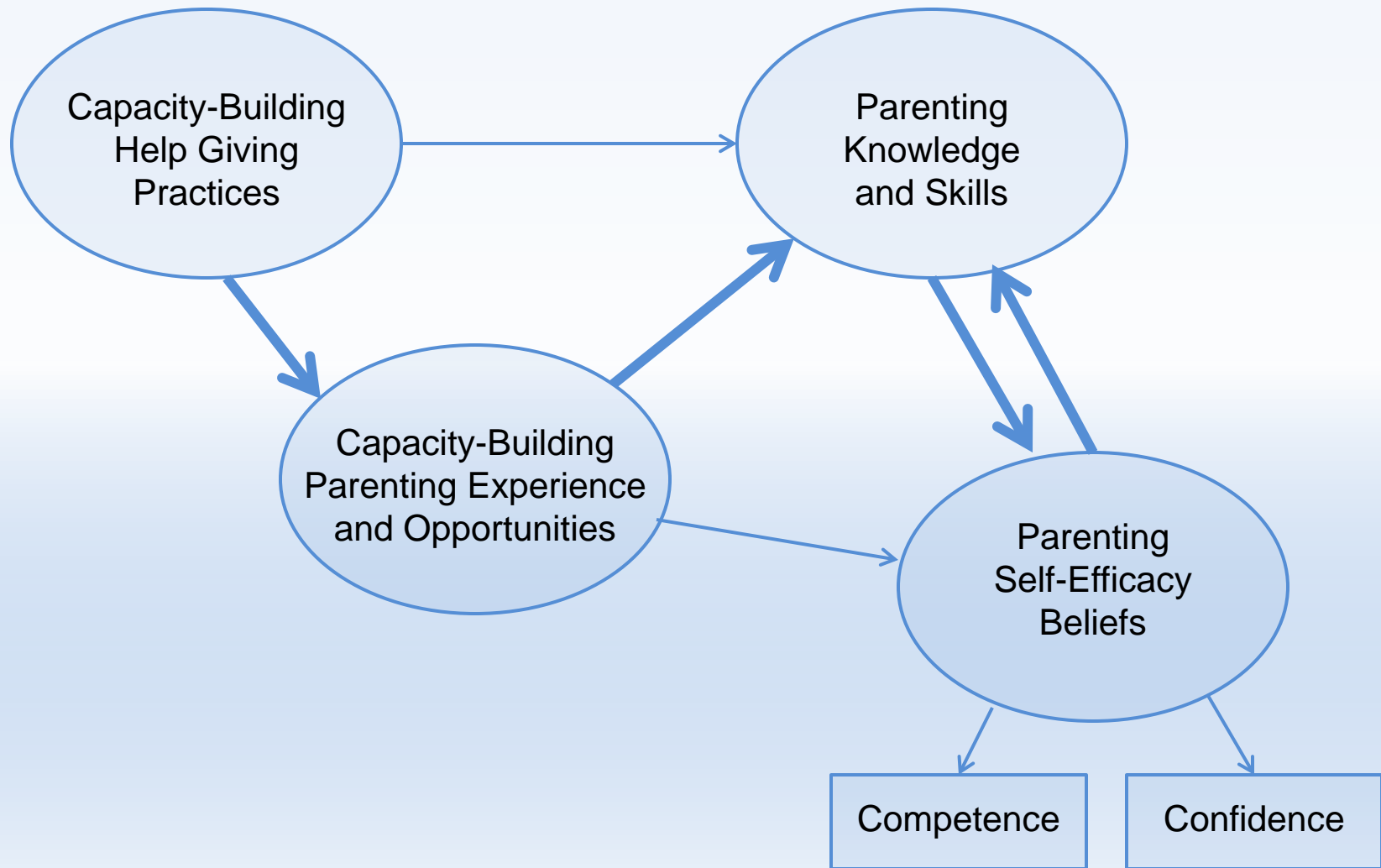
The experiences afforded parents to strengthen and build parenting capacity must also influence or change a parents' sense of confidence and competence if a parent is to ***sustain engagement*** in parenting behavior.

- A ***sense of competence*** refers to the (self-efficacy) belief that one's behavior will have the expected effect or outcome
- A ***sense of confidence*** refers to the (self-efficacy) belief that one has the capacity to perform a parenting task competently

Contrasting Consequences of Different Parenting Experiences



Model Showing the Relationship Between Capacity-Building Help Giving Practices and Capacity-Building Parenting Experiences and Outcomes



Caregiver Confidence and Competence Associated with the Use of Caregiver-Mediated Intervention Practices

Purpose: Determine the extent to which the use of caregiver-mediated everyday child learning was associated with improvements in caregiver skills, competence, and confidence

Study Participants: Three mothers and one grandmother of preschool aged children with disabilities or developmental delays

Outcomes: Measures of parenting behavior (skills) and parenting self-efficacy beliefs (confidence and competence)

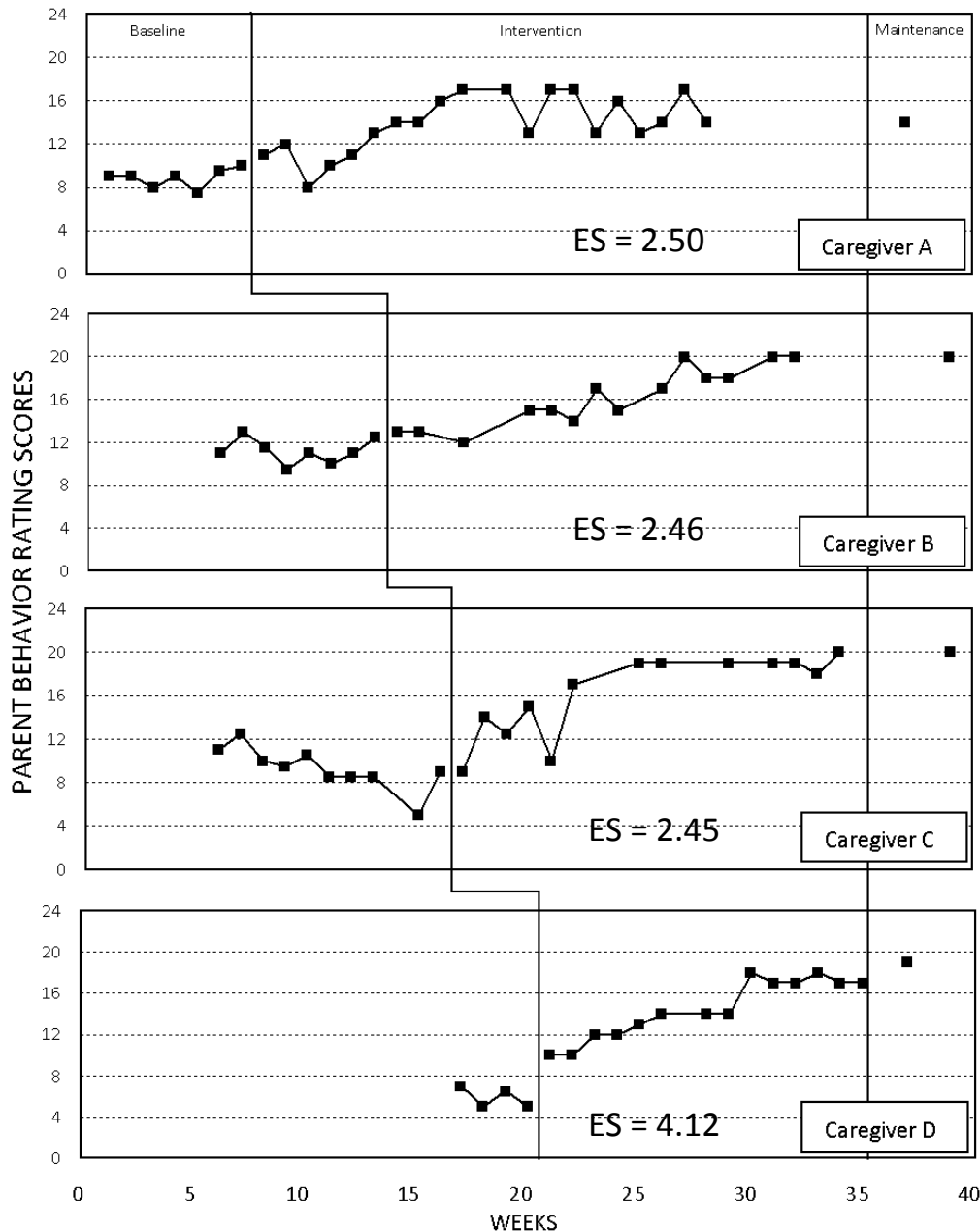
Methodology: Multiple baseline design across study participants

Swanson, J., Raab, M., & Dunst, C.J. (2011). Strengthening family capacity to provide young children everyday natural learning opportunities. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 9(1), 66-80.

Caregiver-Mediated Early Intervention Practices

- Study participants used child interest-based everyday activities as sources of child learning opportunities where the participants supported and encouraged child learning in the activities using responsive teaching procedures.
- Participants identified their children's interests, the everyday activities that were sources of interest-based learning opportunities, and the responsive caregiver behavior that was used to engage and sustain child engagement in interest-based everyday child learning.
- An early childhood practitioner used family capacity-building practices and participatory parenting experiences and opportunities to support and encourage the caregivers' use of the natural environment and responsive teaching practices.

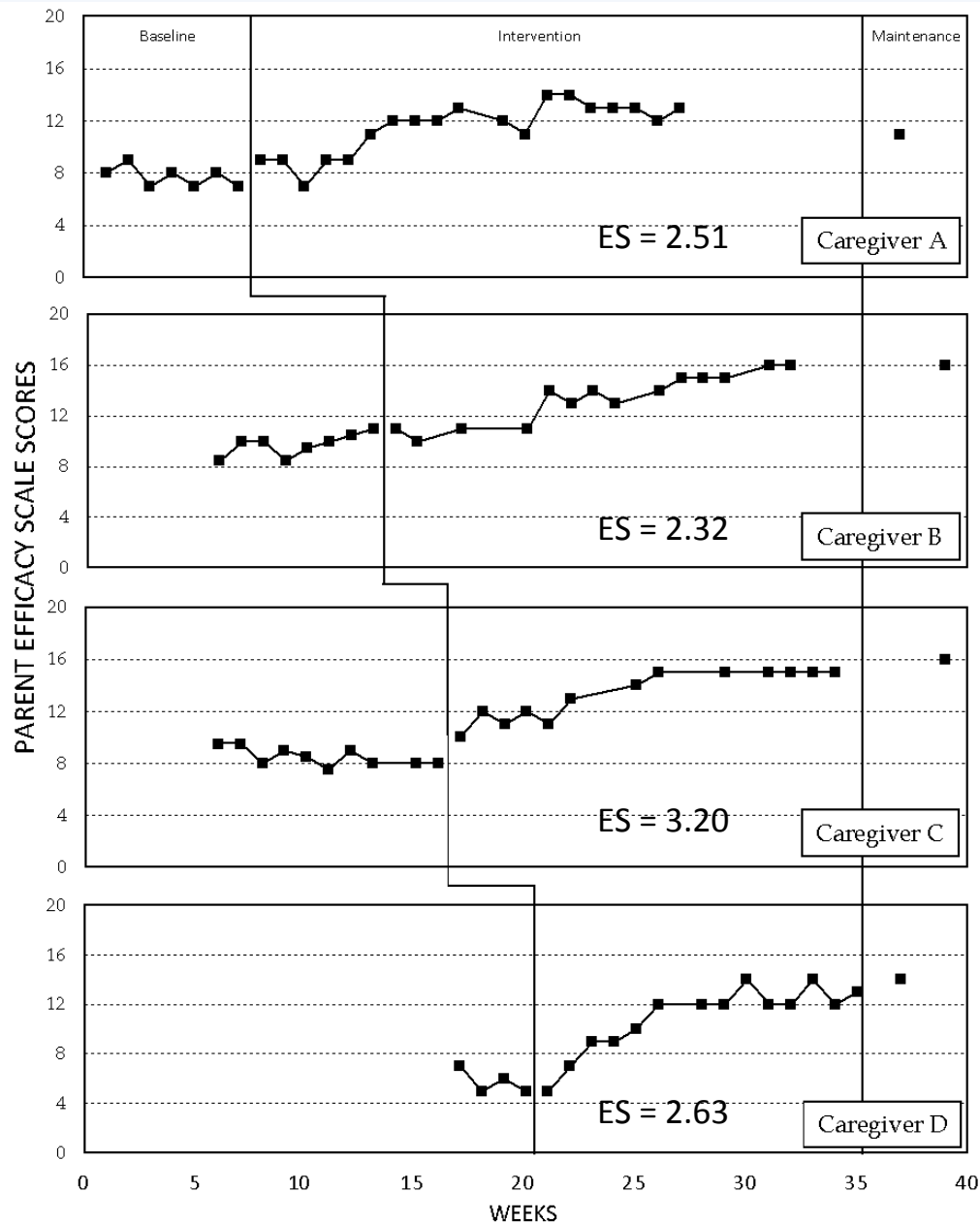
Parenting Skills



Adoption and use of everyday activities as sources of interest-based child learning opportunities strengthened and promoted parents' skills in using the natural learning environment practices

(NOTE. ES = Estimated Cohen's *d* effect size for the baseline vs. intervention phase differences)

Parenting Confidence and Competence



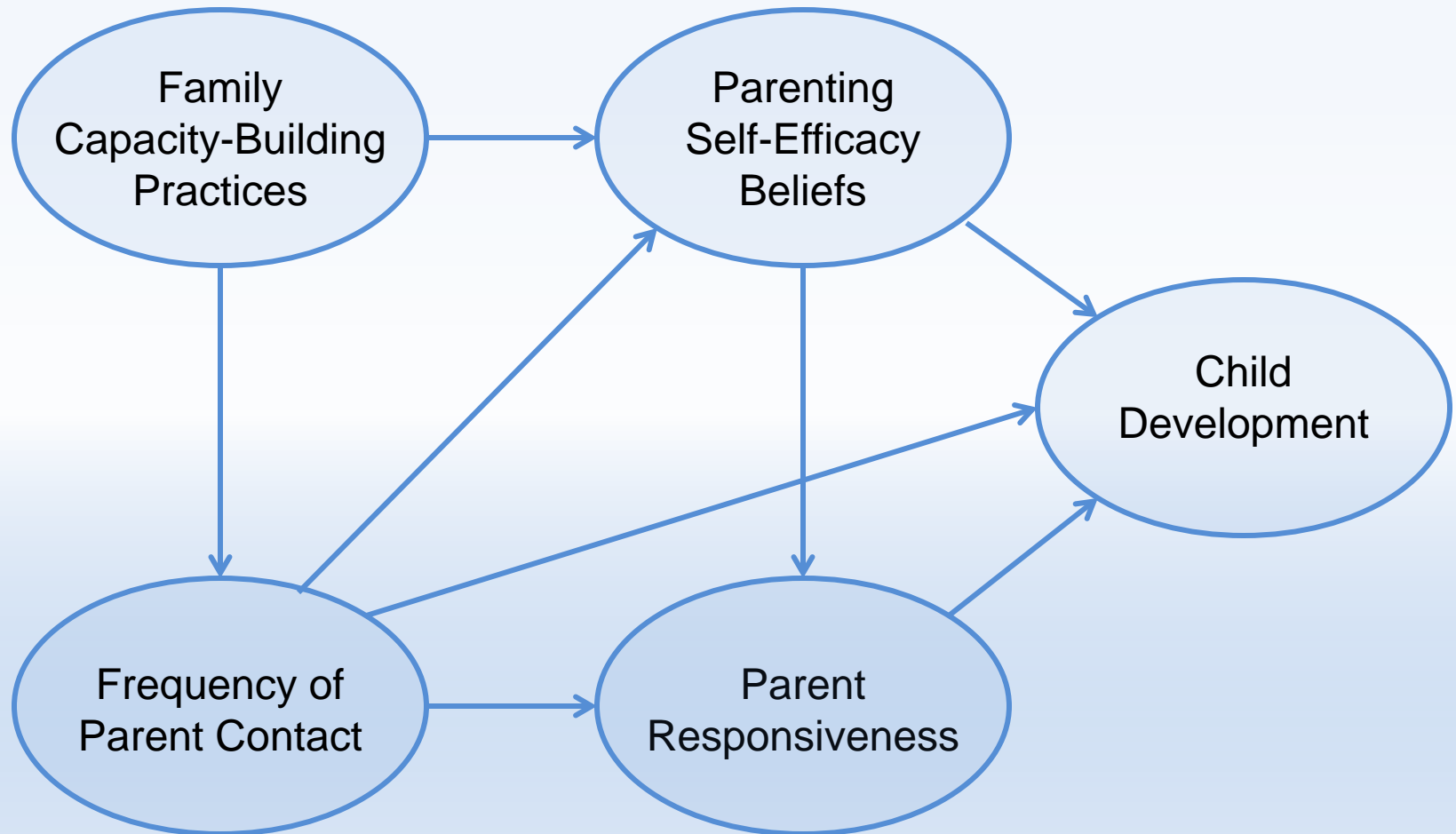
Findings also showed that promoting caregivers' use of everyday activities as sources of interest-based child learning opportunities had the effect of strengthening parenting self-efficacy competence and confidence beliefs

(NOTE. ES = Estimated Cohen's *d* effect size for the baseline vs. intervention phase differences)

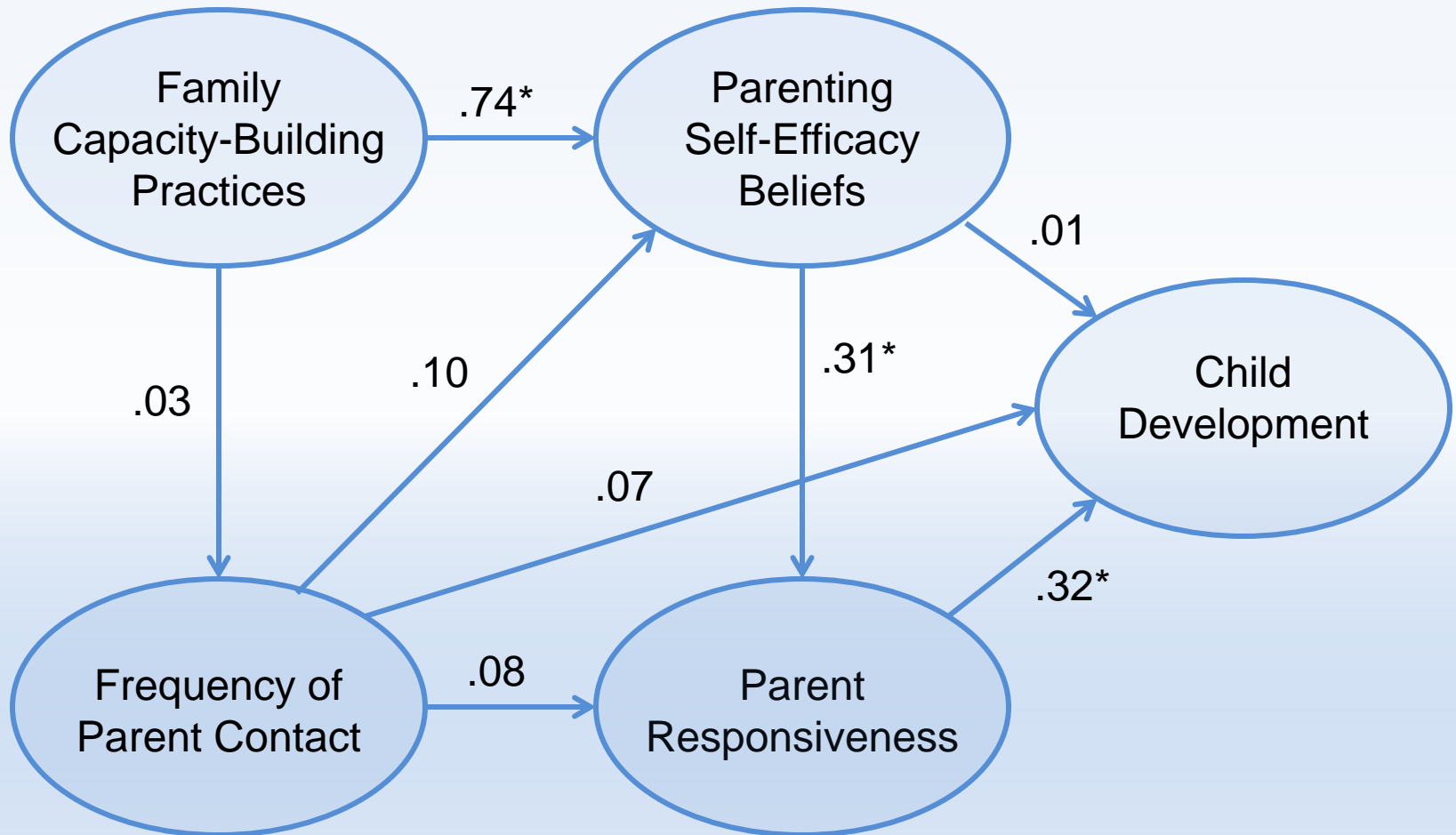
Meta-Analysis of the Influences of Family Capacity-Building Practices on Parenting and Child Outcomes

- 49 studies including 15,382 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with identified disabilities or delays and their parents
- Secondary analyses of a subset of measures were conducted for testing the relationships among the variables in our family capacity-building model
- The measures included family capacity-building practices (relational and participatory help giving), frequency of parent-practitioner contact, parenting self-efficacy beliefs, parent responsiveness during parent-child interactions, and child development (cognitive and language development)
- Meta-analytic structural equation modeling was used to analyze the relationships among the study variables

Hypothesized Relationships Among the Variables in the Model

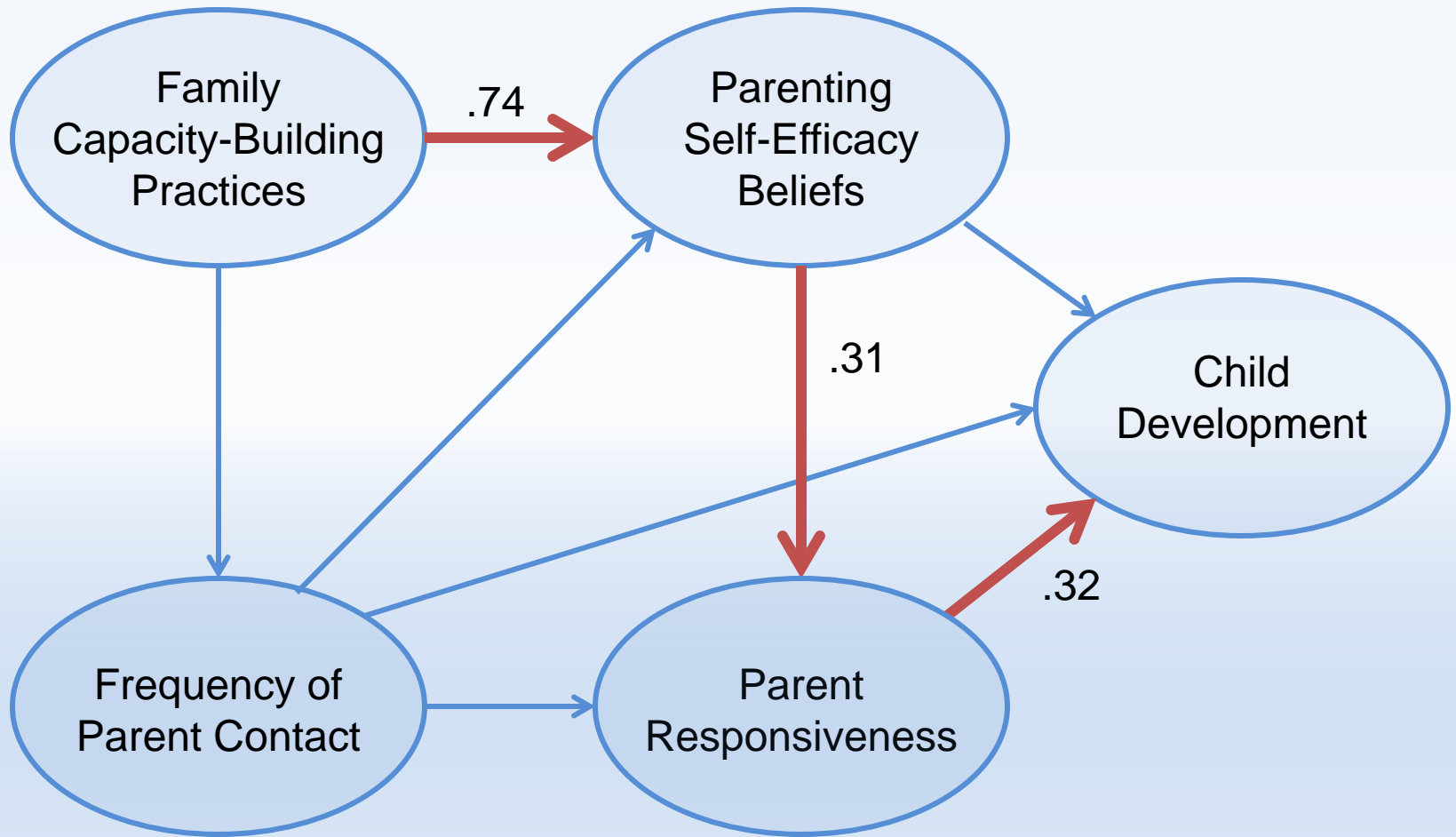


Standardized Structural Path Coefficients



*p < .0001.

Pathways of Influence in the Capacity-Building Model



From Research to Practice

- Findings from our research and practice have been used to develop an evidence-based approach to family capacity-building and to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach in a number of studies and demonstration projects
- Results from those studies and demonstration projects have been used to modify and improve the capacity-building approach to promoting parents' involvement in their children's early intervention

An Evidence-Based Approach to Family Capacity-Building

The research foundations for the capacity-building practices used to support and strengthen parents' abilities to provide their children early intervention include meta-analyses of family-centered help giving practices research and findings from a meta-analysis of adult learning methods

Family-Centered Practices Research Studies

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2007) *Meta-analysis of family-centered help giving practices research. Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 13*, 370-378.

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2008). *Research synthesis and meta-analysis of studies of family-centered practices* (Winterberry Monograph Series). Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

Adult Learning Studies

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2010) Meta-analysis of the effectiveness of four adult learning methods and strategies. *International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, 3*(1), 91-112

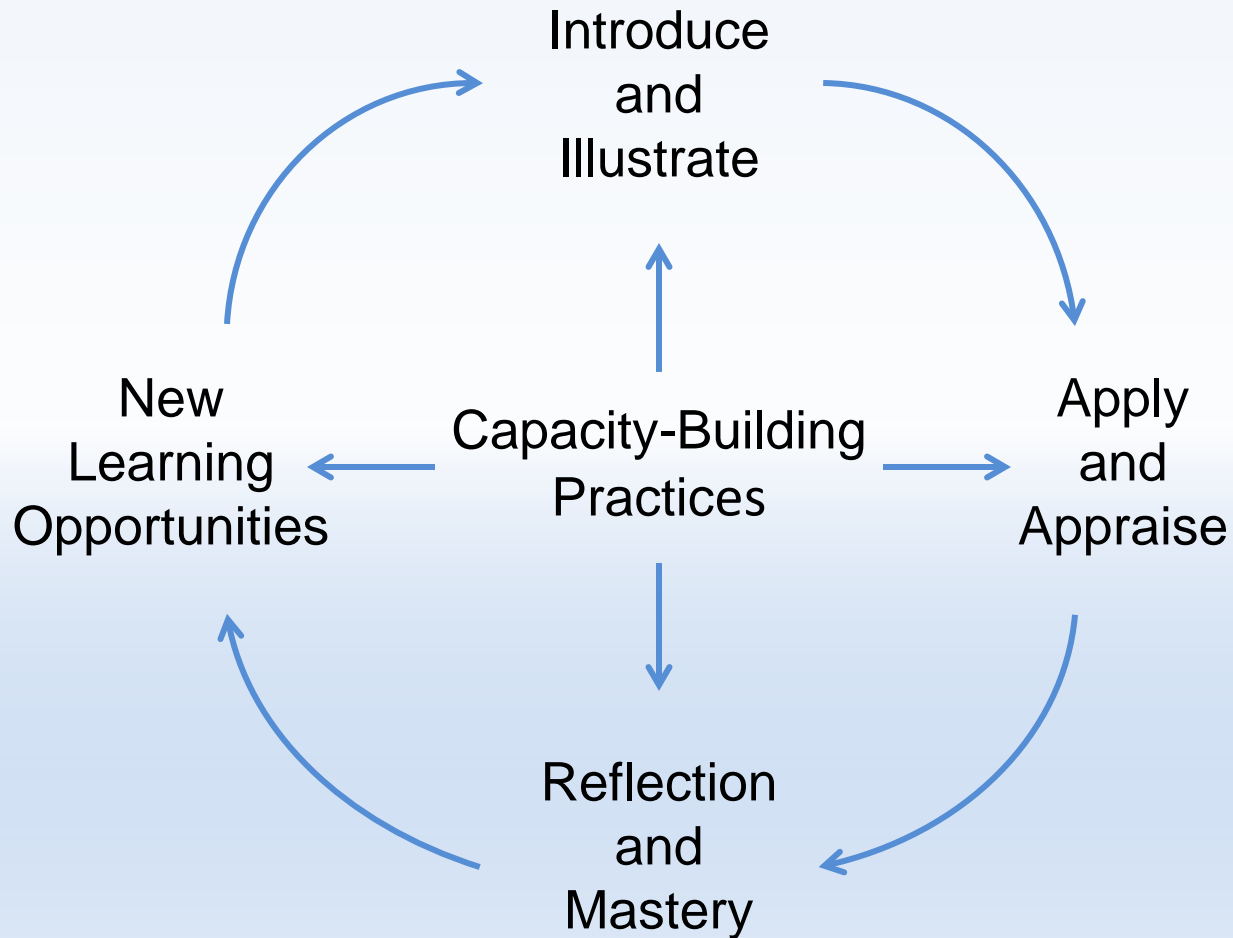
Dunst, C. J., & Trivette, C. M. (2012) Moderators of the effectiveness of adult learning method practices. *Journal of Social Sciences, 8*, 143-148.

An Approach to Family Capacity-Building in Early Childhood Intervention

The family capacity-building practices include methods and procedures for:

- Introducing and illustrating a practice to a parent
- Having the parent use the practice and appraise (evaluate) his or her experience with the practice
- Engaging the parent in descriptions (assessment and reflection) of his or her understanding and ability to use the practice
- Having the parent (based on his/her experiences, understanding, and mastery) identify and engage in other learning opportunities to build and strengthen a parent's understanding and use of the practice

Family Capacity-Building Process



Take-Home Messages

- The ways in which early childhood practitioners involve parents in their children's early intervention “matter a great deal” if practitioner practices are likely to have capacity-building characteristics and consequences
- The research foundations for family capacity-building practices “point to” the most important features and elements of this approach to early childhood intervention
- The challenge to adoption and use of family capacity-building practices is the need to “make a shift” in the paradigms that guide the ways in which early childhood intervention practitioners involve parents in early intervention

PowerPoint available at:
www.puckett.org/presentations.php