

LET'S TALK

LANGUAGE STIMULATION

As an adult who is regularly in contact with children, you play a vital role in their language skill development. Whether you are a father, mother teacher, nurse or child care worker, a child's daily routine offers you many opportunities during which you can encourage language development. The only 'educational tools' required are a desire to help the child learn and a little bit of patience.

READING TO YOUR CHILD IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND EFFECTIVE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO TALK AND READ – MAKE A POINT OF READING TO YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY

GETTING DRESSED

First thing in the morning and several times during the day, children get dressed and undressed. Conversation is a pleasant diversion from frustrating zippers and buttons!

- Talk to the infant or child
- Listen carefully to responses
- Name pieces of clothing and encourage the child to repeat these names
- Give directions about how to dress ("The socks go on your feet")
- Name colors and shapes
- Count buttons on clothing
- Allow the child to assist in dressing a younger brother or sister. ("Bring me her yellow t-shirt.")
- Provide dolls which can be dressed and undressed

MEAL TIME

Mealtime is traditionally a time for "Family talk", All members of the family can include even the very young child in conversation.

- Talk to the infant or child and listen carefully to his responses and questions
- Take turns talking – avoid the confusion of several conversations at one time
- Repeat the names of objects and foods (spoon, potato)
- Include concepts – size and quantity – in conversations. ("Do you want a big glass of milk?" "Do you want more potatoes?")
- Identify colors ("pears are green." "Milk is white.")
- Allow the child to help set and clear the table ("Where does the cup go?" "Bring me all the spoons.")
- Ask the child questions about daily activities

WATCHING TELEVISION

Many children spend at least part of their day watching television. Well chosen television programs are themselves aids to language development. However, their effectiveness can be increased by a little input from you.

- Choose programs most appropriate for the age of the child
- Watch television with the child
- Ask questions about a program ("Who was jumping up and down?")
- Listen and respond to what he says ("Yes, the little girl was lost.")
- Relate the program to the child's environment. ("Is that like our dog?")
- Point out objects, colors, sizes and shapes and repeat the words
- Sing along or clap to the rhythm when watching musical programs

GOING SHOPPING

Shopping with children need not be a dreaded activity. The products on the shelves and activities in the store provide plenty of topics for conversation. The child can be kept so busy talking and asking questions that he won't have time to get into mischief!

- Take time to talk to the child about the products
- Point out the size, shape and color of the products and encourage the child to repeat these words
- Explain what the product is and how it is used
- Tell the child what you need and allow him to select the appropriate item
- Identify and sound out the letters on the packages
- Ask the child to identify numbers on price tags
- Encourage conversation between the child and familiar people you meet

BATH TIME

Bath time provides an excellent opportunity to stimulate language development in the infant or child.

- Say the names of the parts of the body being washed and repeat them
- Talk about what you are doing ("I'm washing your face.")
- Repeat correctly any word the child says incorrectly (foot for poot)
- Keep the conversation flowing. Talk about daily events
- Encourage the child to identify objects around him ("Where is the soap?")
- Show the child how his toys can illustrate different concepts. ("The duck is swimming in the water. Take the duck out of the water.")

GOING FOR A RIDE

If a child is kept interested while traveling he will be less restless and the ride will be more enjoyable for everyone.

- Explain car safety. ("Why we use seat belts")

- Play games – counting animals, horses, cars
- Talk about where you are going and what you will do when you get there
- Sing songs
- Talk about what is heard on the radio
- Provide books for the child to look at or read
- Point out unfamiliar objects to the child. (“Look at the animals”)

Remember, even though an infant may not understand or speak to you. It is important that you speak to him. Encourage the infant by imitating any sounds he makes, such as “cooling”.

These activities can be fitted into every child’s daily routine. Take the time to try them. Because no two children are exactly alike, other ideas can be developed and geared towards a particular child or special activity.

Watching and helping a child as he learns to communicate is exciting – you ‘ll be glad that you took the time!

If for any reason, you are concerned about a child’s speech and language development, contact you family doctor or local health unit.

Concerned about your preschool child's ability to talk and understand what you say to them

(Calgary resources – prepared by Collaborative Mental Health Care for children on our waitlists who also have speech/language concerns)

1. These websites links you with resources:

- Handouts with general ideas that will help encourage your child's speech and language development & Talking is Key video – <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/3595.asp>
- Talk Box - <http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca/publish/920.htm>

2. Magic Carpet Ride is a fun, FREE program for parents and their preschool children! Offered by the Calgary Learning Centre.

The program provides information and tips for parents to help their children for school. Families learn together in sessions that include stories, songs, play and learning and activity centres.

Children enjoy learning to love books and reading. Parents are involved in helping their children learn, both in the program and at home.

For more information and to register, please contact Nada Jerkovic, Manager, Family Literacy at 403 686 9300 x 128 or email at nada.jerkovic@calgarylearningcentre.com (put Learning Starts at Home in the subject line.)

3. Check out resources at your local Parent Link Centre

http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca/publish/PLC_Regional_Map.asp

- May have the Ages& Stages Developmental screening Questionnaires, which can increase your understanding of your child's development
- Mother Goose Program
- L.E.A.P. – Literacy Education Attachment Parenting

4. Check out your Community Library

- Wide range of programs such as, Drop – in Storytime, songs and finger plays the whole family can enjoy

5. Inventory of Programs and Services impacting literacy for young children in Calgary:

<http://www.calgaryreads.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Calgary-Reads-Inventory-of-Programs-and-Services-impacting-literacy-for-young-children-in-Calgary.pdf>