

13 Simple Ways That Any Adult Can Support the Language Development of Young Children

LISTEN TO CHILDREN

1. DEMONSTRATE RESPECT: Listen to children from the earliest days and show them that you respect them. When children are confident, they will naturally want to express themselves through spoken and written language.

2. LISTEN FULLY: When children speak to you, listen carefully and do not assume that you already know what they want to say. Remember that they might need extra time to express themselves. Be patient.

SPEAK TO CHILDREN

3. ENUNCIATE: Speak clearly and slowly. Children are absorbing your language.

4. VOCABULARY: Use precise and enriching vocabulary so children can increase theirs. Children with larger vocabularies are able to express themselves more fully. For example, talk about the “Angular-winged Katydid” rather than “the bug”.

5. FULL SENTENCES: Answer questions with full sentences. Avoid answers of yes or no. Children are absorbing your sentence structure.



CREATE A LIBRARY

6. MAKE YOUR OWN BOOKS: In the beginning, make short books yourself, with sentences created by the children, and maybe using the children’s names. This will show the children that books are relevant to their personal lives.

7. READING NOOK: Arrange a special place for reading where the child can enjoy silence and focus (comfortable chair, small side table, lamp, picture on wall, a small rug).

8. CRITERIA: Select nonfiction books and poems for the library where the children can find phonograms and other interesting words embedded in content that helps them make sense of their world.

WHEN CHALLENGES ARISE...

9. TANTRUMS: Keep Calm. Children from birth to six years may have trouble expressing themselves. This is not lack of intelligence, but lack of language. Temper tantrums are often a sign that the child cannot communicate effectively.

10. MISTAKES: Children should feel that learning from mistakes is a natural way to gain a skill;

we become better at what we practice. Instead of correcting a child, repeat the sounds during other activities (i.e. sound games) so the child can listen and practice the sounds.

TIPS & STRATEGIES

11. DAILY CONVERSATION: Create daily opportunities to exchange spontaneous language with children related to their environment. For example, discuss a painting on the wall, tell an interesting story about the bees or ants, silk worms or cotton flowers, sing a song, etc.

12. READING ALOUD: Avoid pressuring the child to read aloud to other people. Reading aloud is an art which develops over time. The way to support that development is by reading aloud to the child frequently, with fluency and feeling.

13. SPEAKING TO ALL AGES: Make sure there is an atmosphere in the classroom and home environment where children feel free to speak to people of any age, and where they can expect that others will listen to them.

