

PARENT EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Workshop Topic:

Speaking and Listening

CCRS Speaking & Listening Anchor 6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

NELP Predictors of Later Success

- **Reading readiness:** usually a combination of alphabet knowledge, concepts of print, vocabulary, and phonological awareness
- **Phonological memory:** the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time
- **Oral language:** the ability to produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar

Objective: At the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Explain the importance of developing listening and conversational skills
- Give at least two ways they can support their child's listening skills
- State the difference between directive talk and conversation

Materials:

- Audio tape of various environmental sounds
- Copies of *Talking and Listening* parent handout
- Copies of *Talk with Your Child* parent handout

Welcome/Ice Breaker:

Greet parents as they come in. Build rapport and break the ice.

Have some fun with listening! Play a recording of different environmental or interesting sounds. Ask participants to distinguish the sounds. Or you could ask the participants to sit with their eyes closed and listen to the different sounds they hear. Ask them to identify the sounds they hear while listening attentively; they might hear breathing, coughing, car horns, the heating/AC system, traffic noises, and the like. How could they make either of these into a game for children?

How does it feel to be a child?

Parents often forget how it feels to be a child. This activity will help them remember what it is like to be the "little person" among much bigger people. It also will be the opening to begin talking about parent-child interactions.

Directions

- Have parents find a partner. They are going to take turns being the adult and the child.
- One parent plays the adult and the other parent plays the child
- The "adult" talks to the "child" while standing tall; the child sits on the floor looking up at the adult while she is talking to him. The adult can talk about anything, give the child directions, mention the weather, or the like.

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- Then have the partners switch roles and repeat the activity.
- Call the group back together and discuss
 - How did it feel to be the child? The adult?
 - How could the adults make this a more comfortable experience for children?

Topic Review:

Children learn the sounds of language by listening to people talk. As children learn to talk with others, they ask questions, learn the meaning of words, and find out interesting and important things about the world around them. Experiences of listening and talking prepare children to read! Children can listen and talk about much more complex ideas than they can read and write about. Listening comprehension is much more sophisticated than reading comprehension. Just try to skip a page in a familiar story! Your child will let you know!

Children who demonstrate higher skill levels of language and literacy development in kindergarten are children who generally have experienced a lot of talk with new words and frequent literacy activities, such as varied book reading with adults. (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Eliot, 1999)

Opening Activity:

Distribute the handout, Talking and Listening (Language Development) which is an introduction to the session. It has introductory information, the following questions and room for writing.

- What do you think of as “rich” conversation?
- What changes simple “talk” with your children into “rich” conversation?
- When in your daily routines, do you have “rich” conversation with your children?

Put the introductory information into your own words and have parents discuss the questions in small groups. Return to the large group and review parents’ ideas.

Central Ideas and Practice (Content and Strategies):

Young children learn from everyone and everything they see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. They learn by interacting with loved ones, by watching and listening to others talk, and by imitating what they see and hear. From the time they are tiny, children are fascinated with our voices, songs, and the sounds of the world around them. Loving parents that take time to talk and listen, sing songs, play and share things about their world give children wonderful experiences and information they will want to talk about.

A baby might hear the family dog bark, touch his soft fur, feel his wet nose, and hear someone call his name—Spunky. This begins to build the child’s “file folder” of information that will be labeled “dog.” New words and experiences are added to this “dog file” so that when the child is able to talk, she will be able to attach words to her knowledge about dogs—they have cold, wet noses, might bite, run fast, jump up on you, and can snuggle close. As the child grows, the file could also grow to create a more complete understanding about dogs—there are many breeds that have similarities and differences. Dogs are pets and companions and some are work mates to people.

A child who does not have rich learning experiences has fewer and less complete “file folders” to build upon as she grows. New bits of information might not be understood or might not have a “folder” where related information lives. It is important that parents learn their role in providing their child with experiences so she can build her language skills.

Talking with and listening to young children help develop language skills. When parents give children opportunities to participate in conversations, they learn the “dance of language” where partners take turns talking and listening. This teaches children the rhythm of conversation as they speak, listen, and respond.

Language used in many daily experiences and conversations can be full of learning. The way parents

respond to their children invites conversations. Remember: frequent, meaningful, and interesting conversations with parents are important ways to provide rich language learning.

Discuss the following ways to respond that will interest your children in conversation and help them grow and learn.

Child's level—Sit, stoop or kneel. This keeps your child from feeling frightened by a tall adult standing over him.

Respond when your child starts a conversation — Use prompt responses that invite him to talk with you. “You’re right, the telephone is ringing. Who do you think it might be?” “Yes, the truck is red. Do you see anything else red?”

Respond to non-verbal cues and gestures — Use and respond to your child’s cues and gestures by pointing, looking, and using words. “You look like you are hungry; do you want some milk?” “You’re pointing to your shoes. Do you want me to help you tie them?”

Turn taking — During conversations, turn taking means both speaking and listening. This can be a good time to help your child become a successful listener. A sign of listening is the eye contact and attention given to the speaker. Listening is also signaled by what the listener says that shows interest (maybe with questions) or understanding of the ideas and feelings expressed—“Wow, that must have made you happy!”

Use open-ended questions — Ask questions that your child can’t answer with a “yes” or “no” or other one-word answer. This invites her to talk and think. Ask questions you do not know the answer to. “Tell me about your trip to the store with Grandma.” “I almost forgot to put the milk away. What do you think would happen if I left it on the table all day?”

Parallel talk — Describe what your child is doing. This helps him learn new words. Parallel talk is important because you use words to help him understand what he is doing or seeing. “You’re playing with the blue truck.” “Wow, look at all those blocks you have stacked. I wonder how many more you can add?”

Self-talk — Talk about what you are doing or thinking. Do this while you are feeding, bathing, or doing housework. This type of talk gives your child words to use to describe what she is seeing. “I’m pouring the apple juice in the green cup.” “Let’s wash the dishes. We’ll wash the silverware first, then the plates.”

Use child’s words — Repeat what your child says in his words. This helps your child know that his words are important. It allows him to hear his own words spoken again. “You’re right—it is a bird.”

Build on children’s language and ideas — Parents help build children’s thinking and language. For example, your child might say “shoes.” You may respond with, “Yes, those are your blue shoes!” You see elephants on TV. “You’re right. Elephants are big. In fact they are enormous!”

Application:

Expanding Conversation Activity

Context for Activity:

Children need to hear a lot of language from more accomplished speakers. This utilizes and expands children’s receptive (understanding) capabilities, opens the door for children to practice and expand their expressive (spoken word) capabilities, and feeds into their natural desire to learn more. Research has found that all families use a similar amount of command statements (let’s go, put on your shoes, etc.). However, some families also engage in rich conversations which help their children expand their vocabularies and become accomplished conversationalists.

The goal of this activity is to help parents understand how simple command or maintenance statements can be expanded or enriched. In this activity, you’ll practice taking some everyday language and

expanding it to include more and richer words. Talking with your child—experiencing the give and take of conversation and learning new words—is a strategy that can be used any time you are with your child.

Activity Directions:

- Ask participants for positive everyday statements that they use or have heard other parents use when asking for something or giving directions to a child (sit down, time to go). CHART responses on easel page labeled “Penny Statements.” (To save time, you may want to have a list already prepared.)
- Give each table or group of three or four parents a statement from the master list.
- Ask them to turn the statement into a “Dollar Statement” by expanding it. Add more words to make it richer. (Remember our earlier discussion about talk and making it richer.) Allow three-four minutes to do this. Caution: often parents add a lot of words and the statement becomes so long that children tune out. We want the statement to be meaningful and within a child’s attention span.
- Ask participants to share their statements.
- Ask groups to count the number of words in their penny statement and then the number in the dollar statement. Compare. If the penny statement was one word and they added one more, they have doubled the number of words.

Talking with your child, using a variety of new and different words, and engaging in the give and take of conversation are interactions that can be used anytime and anywhere. The more you talk to and with your child, and the more you describe things for him, the better! This is an easy way to help your child learn more words and feel comfortable talking with others.

Connection to Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®:

- *Infant/Toddler Connections*
 - Begin talking, singing, and reading to your child when he is a baby.
 - Sing songs and do finger plays with your child.
 - Set aside a special time each day to read aloud to your child.
 - Take nature walks in the neighborhood or in the park. Spend time talking in detail with your child about things you can see, hear, or touch, such as leaves, rain, and insects
- *Preschool Connections*
 - When giving directions to your child, use short sentences and explain clearly what you want her to do. As she grows older, increase the length of the directions using words that describe. For example, instead of saying, “Please bring me the book.” you might say, “Please bring me the book we want to read tonight. I left it on the desk in your room.” Ask your child questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer; ask questions that helps her talk more openly.
 - Listen carefully as your child talks to you. Answer his questions and take time to explain things to him.
 - Play games such as “Red-Light, Green-Light” and “Simon Says” that require talking, listening, following directions, and giving directions.
 - Read stories and informational books aloud for as long as you can read and your child can listen. If your child becomes restless, lay the book aside and come back to it at another time. Reading should be enjoyable; do not force your child to sit and listen.
 - Use your child’s interests such as trains to identify new words—locomotive, caboose, dining car.
 - Read stories to your child and have him tell the stories back to you.

- Record yourself reading a book and let your child play the tape and read along in the book on his own. Your library may have a good selection of books on tape that your child can listen to. By starting young, your child may learn to love listening and will want to continue to listen to books on tape for a lifetime!
- Have your child “read” to you from a picture book (perhaps a wordless picture book) by making up his own story about the pictures.
- Draw pictures with your child and take turns telling stories about the pictures.
- Give your child time to respond to a question or comment—count slowly to five. Remember she is learning to have conversations and needs time to think of what to say.

- *Elementary Connections*

- Pick a topic of interest to your child and have him learn new things about it. Ask him to tell you and other family members what he has learned.
- When you watch a television show or movie together, be sure to talk with your child about the program or movie.
- Choose books or stories to read that have new and different vocabulary. Talk about the new words and point to them as they appear in the book.
- Talk with your child about his experiences when he is away from you. Be specific about what you want to know. “What were the names of the children who were there?” “What did you see on the way to school?”
- Talk with your child about events or experiences that have happened in the past or might happen in the future.

- *Middle School Connections*

- Fun activities can help get children motivated to learn what listening means. If your child likes to draw, play “Follow the Directions”: One person gives short, simple instructions and the other must draw according to the directions heard.
- “Simon Says” is typically a game for younger children, but it can be adapted to older children by incorporating more complex or silly directives.
- Have fun with “Blindfold Obstacle Course” in which one person is blindfolded and must follow the directions of a partner to move through an obstacle course.
- With “Copycat Rhythm,” take turns listening to a rhythm clapped or tapped out and then repeat it perfectly. This can be done with younger children; use complex patterns or unique instruments with older children.

Wrap up/Closure:

- Language development starts at birth and continues throughout life.
- Language development follows a developmental sequence and it is helpful if parents support their child with age-appropriate experiences and lots of opportunities for conversations.
- Young children have receptive language (language they understand) and expressive language (language they understand and speak).
- Parents who have meaningful conversations with their children are providing building blocks for future success in reading and writing.

Ask parents:

How do you plan to use the parent-child interaction strategies we learned more about today with your children this week?

Provide the handout, *Talk with Your Child*, for the parents to take with them.

Parent Handout

Talking and Listening (Language Development)



Children seem to learn language naturally, so adults often assume that it is simply because the child is getting older and it is expected that he will be able to talk. But it is not. Children’s language development follows a pattern—beginning with infants’ cooing and babbling to toddlers’ first words and later preschoolers’ questions. Like all areas of development, learning to communicate is the result of all experiences from birth on.

There’s an old saying “Children should be seen and not heard.” However, research emphatically shows that children should be heard and not silent. It has been found that when children are given the chance to talk as well as listen, they gain language skills essential to success in reading and writing.

Below are some questions to talk about with your small group.

What do you think of as “rich” conversation?

What changes simple “talk” with your children into “rich” conversation?

Think about your daily routines. When do you have “rich” conversations with your child?

Parent Handout

Talk with Your Child



Tell stories

- “When you were a baby...”
- “One time when I was your age...”

Describe your actions

- “I’m putting some oil in this boiling water so the pasta won’t stick together. Now I’ll put in the pasta. Look at the steam from that pot— I’d better be careful.”

Describe your child’s actions

- “You are digging a very deep hole with that shovel.”
- “You are building a tall skinny tower with the blocks.”

Expand words

- “That’s right. It’s a puppy. See how short and long this puppy is? He’s a dachshund.”

Have conversations with your child

- “Tell me how you made this picture.”

Ask questions that have more than one or two word answers

- “What happened that made you feel sad?”
- “What do you think he’s doing?”