

Strategies for Promoting Communication and Language of Infants and Toddlers



**Model Demonstration Center for Promoting
Language and Literacy Readiness in
Early Childhood**

**Juniper Gardens Children's Project
University of Kansas**

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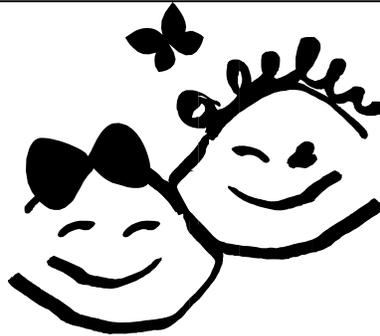
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Purpose

What this manual covers

- In this manual, you'll read about eight strategies that promote communication and language development of infants and toddlers. Research and practice have shown that these strategies are effective in promoting the communication of infants and toddlers with and without disabilities. In fact, you and others at your home or program may already be using some of these strategies.
- This manual defines these effective strategies and describes why they are important for helping young children develop stronger communication skills. The manual also provides examples of how these strategies may be used across home and program routines and activities such as playtime, clean-up time, book reading, circle time, mealtime, and diapering.



Why is promoting communication important?

- Promoting communication and language development in infants and toddlers is important for many reasons. Research has shown that greater language exposure and use ...
 1. Promotes appropriate social interaction
 2. Predicts greater vocabulary size at age 3 and beyond
 3. Predicts reading and language skills by 3rd grade
 4. Predicts Kindergarten readiness
 5. Helps to prevent problem behavior
- So, talking to children is very important. It helps young children to become better communicators, to become better prepared for school, and to develop the communication skills to build friendships.

Promoting communication within daily routines:

- The predictability of routines helps children to learn what is expected during different activities and how to behave during those activities. When routines, such as mealtimes, nap times, separating from a parent, and toileting have built-in consistently, children learn to behave in a way that is appropriate for the routine. A goal in having predictable routines is to create a nurturing, flexible, and positive environment in which children can begin to explore.
- Daily routines provide wonderful opportunities for children to learn more about themselves, their environment, and other people. Children's learning occurs in informal activities as much as in formal instruction.
- Hand washing, toileting, mealtime, and naptime are some of the many routines that occur daily and are repeated throughout the day. Because of the regularity and predictability of these routines they are often carried out in a manner that may not take advantage of the natural teaching opportunities they present. It is easy for them to become - well, boring. Routines can become learning activities when some time is taken to plan for what might be taught during such routines.
- As children develop, routines also need to change to match the child's level of development. For example, new songs and games may be introduced, talk can become more complex. It is important to build opportunities for flexibility and occasional surprise into routines and activities so that children find them new and interesting.



How to use this manual:

- Each targeted communication-promoting strategy is organized to provide the following information:
 1. Definition and description of the strategy
 2. Information about *why* the strategy is important
 3. Description of *how* the strategy may be used
 4. Examples of using the strategy with infants and toddlers at the pre-word stage of communication
 5. Examples of using the strategy with infants and toddlers at the single and multiple-word stage of communication
- Although each strategy is described individually, using a variety of strategies simultaneously will provide children with many varied opportunities to practice communication skills. The coordinated use of these strategies will benefit children as they learn to become effective communicators.

We look forward to working together to individualize this manual to meet the needs of each family, service provider, and program.



Arranging the Environment



Arranging the Environment

What is Arranging the Environment?

- Structuring the physical environment of the home or classroom to promote opportunities for children to communicate more frequently throughout the day.
- Promoting social interactions to provide opportunities for frequent communication throughout the day. Arranging a developmentally appropriate social environment to provide a setting for children to actively engage in a wide variety of communication and interaction-promoting activities.
- Following a regular schedule of activities throughout the day and establishing routines that become familiar to children.

Why is Arranging the Environment important?

- The physical and social structure of the home or classroom affects the way children learn and how they relate to one another. A well-organized home or classroom can facilitate learning and social interactions. Children will be more likely to communicate about something they can see, feel or find easily.
- The arrangement of the physical and social environment can help children develop cooperation and independence and promote skill and concept development.
- Having and following daily routines helps children become more independent and develop a sense of knowing what to expect throughout the day.
- Transitions are often a bit hectic for children, but can be excellent teaching opportunities. Structuring transitions by using a song or a game can help children move more easily from one activity to another and gives them an opportunity to practice communicating.

Ways to Arrange the Environment.

- Room arrangement should encourage children to initiate communication about things they need, want, or find interesting. For example, pictures of children and their families posted on the walls promote communication about them.
- Plan a range of developmentally appropriate activities designed to enhance language development and positive interactions.
- Identify toys, materials, and activities that children play with or show an interest in, and include these in the physical arrangement of the home or classroom.
- Have a schedule of activities posted in the classroom as a reminder for you and the children in your room. Talk to children about what is planned for the day and about any special activities that may occur.
- Structure transitions to avoid having children simply “wait” without having anything to do. Children often have difficulty sitting or standing still for even a short time.

Arranging Materials and the Physical Environment

- Rotate toys so that children have opportunities to play with a wide variety of toys
- Display toys/materials at a height accessible to children. They may then choose toys of interest to them and be more likely to talk about these preferred toys.
- Place some preferred toys out of reach, but within view, so that children may need to communicate their requests for toys.
- Provide some duplicates of toys and materials (e.g., enough musical instruments for each child to have one) to promote social interaction and positive social behavior.
- Arrange specific play areas (e.g., cause-effect toys, dramatic play area, manipulative play area, book area) in an enticing and engaging manner. Partially setting up the area gives children a “starter” activity to expand and talk about.
- Structure multiple activities so that children can participate in a play activity alongside one another. Then, encourage children to notice one another during play activities (e.g., “Look, Alex has a ball!”).
- Label shelves and containers with pictures of the materials so children know where materials belong. This will help to promote communication and early literacy.
- Display pictures of children, family members, and teachers on the wall at children’s eye level to promote interest and communication.
- Place pictures on the walls of the diapering area to promote interest and provide a context for communication.
- Place each child’s photo on a chair so they may find their seats at snack.
- Cut out familiar pictures from magazines to make a picture book or a poster to talk about.
- Structure a quiet book reading area away from noisier areas of the room.
- Have books available for children to look at on their own throughout the entire day. Place books on low, accessible shelves and place some books out during free-play. Let the infants play with books, chew on them, or bang them.
- Provide opportunities for independent ‘reading,’ and read aloud to small groups of interested children. During shared book reading, allow children to take turns identifying pictures and turning the pages, and respond to their communication.
- Read some books that are repetitive and predictable and may allow children to participate in the ‘reading’ (e.g., “Brown Bear, Brown Bear”).



Arranging the Social Environment

- Position infants and non-mobile children so they are able to observe and interact with one another.
- Position adults so they are directly facing the child and seated at child's eye level during routine and group activities (e.g., snack, circle).
- Use unexpected events or silly comments to promote communication.
- Structure multiple activities so small groups of children can play together. Encourage children to notice one another during play activities by saying, for example, "Connor has the dinosaurs, they're eating the food."
- Ask questions during book reading, and allow each child an opportunity to respond. Comment positively on children's responses and encourage children to do the same.
- Within play activities, establish some vocalization/phrase to pair with a specific play action, then use the vocalization each time the play action occurs. For example, if a child puts a hat on the adult's head, let the hat fall off and say, "Off." Then, repeat the routine several times to allow the child to imitate the vocalization. If a toddler is cleaning up by putting farm animals into a box, say "Good night, horse; good night, cow," etc. Then, repeat the routine several times to allow the toddler to imitate the phrase.



Structuring Daily Routines and Transitions

- Design, post, and follow a specific daily routine. The routine may be shown through pictures and words of daily activities. This allows children to anticipate, prepare for, and label upcoming activities. The care provider may refer to the picture schedule frequently throughout the day.
- Plan times during the day to talk about the day's schedule. During circle time, you may talk with children about what you are going to do by saying, for example, "First we're having circle, then we'll wash our hands and have breakfast."
- When a transition from one activity to another is going to happen, give children a warning. For example, "In two minutes we are going to clean up." Thus, children will be better prepared for you to say it is time to clean up.
- When moving from one location to another, play "Follow the leader" and allow children to be the leader. The children can then select an animal and pretend to be that animal when walking in the hallway (e.g., quiet mice, sneaky snakes, etc.)
- Avoid having children "wait" during transition times. Waiting means sitting or standing still without having anything to do, and this is often difficult for children to do for even a short moment. If children must wait during transition times, provide some activity. For example, sing songs with the children, encourage them to acknowledge one another or hold hands, play guessing games, or give them some simple manipulative toy.
- Use predictable routines for clean up, diapering, transitions to outside, etc. The routines may include the use of some clearly marked opener/closer, such as a song. For example, "This is the way we go outside, go outside, go outside, this is the way we go outside, when it's time to play." Another common transition song is the "clean up" song.
- Sing songs during diapering, clean up, or transitions between activities and use these songs to teach language. For example, "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" or the "Clean Up" song.
- During routine care activities such as diapering and dressing, place clothing items in silly or unexpected places (e.g., place a mitten on the child's foot, a shoe on the child's hand). This is likely to draw comments from the child.
- Try to set a regular time for book-reading and story time, and stick to those times each day. In addition, provide opportunities for independent 'reading' at other times. During shared book reading, allow children to take turns identifying pictures and turning the pages, and respond to their communication.

NOTES

How I arrange materials and the physical environment:

How I arrange the social environment:

How I structure daily routines and transitions:

Other Notes:

Following Child's Lead and Responsiveness



Following Child's Lead and Responsiveness

What is Following a Child's Lead?

- Noticing what a child is interested in, looking at, playing with, and talking about.
- Using that interest to provide opportunities for communication.
- Attending to and responding to infants and young children when they use vocalizations, words, and gestures.

Why is Following a Child's Lead important?

- By following a child's lead, you are responding to the child's actions and communications.
- A child's attention is greater to objects or activities of the child's choosing than of the teacher's choosing. For example, names of objects are much easier to learn if a child is already attending to the objects.
- By following the child's lead, you increase the chances that the child will be interested in communicating or talking about his or her toys or activities.
- When adults follow children's leads, children are more likely to initiate communication, and may be more likely to want to communicate with the adult in the future.
- Children are more likely to want to communicate and engage in longer "conversations" when adults follow their lead.
- The more opportunities a child has to interact with adults who are following their lead, the more opportunities there will be for teaching and engaging in communication.

Ways to Follow a Child's Lead.

- First, notice what the child is doing, playing with, looking at, or talking about.
- Use the child's current interest as the starting point for communication.
- Follow a child's lead by commenting, labeling, describing, expanding, imitating, or asking questions about a child's toys or activities.
- Join in a child's play and follow their lead in that activity. For example, if a child is naming the characters in a book, the adult should follow the child's lead in this activity rather than try to redirect the child to name the colors.
- Let a child direct your play together. Ask the child about his or her activity, and how you should play. For example, when painting, ask, "What should I paint?"
- If a child does not answer your question, answer it yourself. If you ask, "What color is that?" and the child does not answer, answer that question yourself. "It's red."
- When a child is not engaged in an activity, present him/her with a couple choices. Base those choices on activities in which the child has shown interest in the past. Then, follow the child's lead in the chosen activity. Offering choices gives the child the opportunity to communicate his/her interest to you. By following the child's lead, you are being responsive to his/her interests.

Following Child's Lead and Responsiveness *For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words*

Play Activities

- Describe the child's actions as he or she is doing them or actions that you are helping the child do.
 - "Jumping up and down."
 - "Pushing the child's wheelchair across the room"
- Label the objects with which a child is playing.
 - "That's such a sweet teddy bear."
 - "You have a fire truck."
- Ask open-ended questions about a child's interests.
 - "What are you building?" (or, coloring, cooking, playing, etc)
 - "Who is swinging in the swing?" If the child does not answer, or offers a partial answer, then answer the question yourself. "*Leo* is swinging."
- Allow children to direct your activities.
 - If a child is lining up the blocks to make a road, join in the activity and build the road. Try to avoid directing the child to build a tower.
 - If a child is painting dots, allow the child to continue doing this rather than directing the child to paint a picture.

Daily Routines

- Talk about the foods children are eating at snack or lunch time.
 - "Krystal is eating all her goldfish crackers."
 - "What are you eating now, Dion?"
 - While handing out cups, ask, "What color is your cup, Sam?"
- While changing diapers or dressing, notice where children are looking and talk about the focus of their attention.
 - "What do you see?"
 - If the child is watching you, comment on what you are doing. "Let's put on your shirt." Or, "Now I'm going to wash my hands."
 - "You have sailboats on your diaper. How many sailboats are there?"
- Imitate what a child says during clean-up. If a child says, "dinosaurs," you might say, "Yes, we're picking up the dinosaurs and putting them away."

Book Activities

- When a child is looking at books, join in the activity. Offer to read the book, but if the child wants to look at the pictures and turn the pages, allow them to do so. Comment on the pictures, label the characters, and imitate the child's vocalizations while looking at books.
- Help children with limited movement to point at pictures or turn pages with you.
- If a child is not currently engaged in an activity, pick out two books the child might enjoy and ask, "Which book would you like to read?"

Following Child's Lead and Responsiveness *For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations*

Play Activities

- While playing with dolls, a child places a doll in a bed. Comment by saying, "Baby's sleeping, night-night baby" and place another doll in the bed. Wait for the child to respond.
- A child notices a large construction truck and people working outside the classroom window. Respond by sitting next to the child and saying, "Oh, that's a big truck. What are they doing out there?" This can open up a conversation about the activities of the workers and their trucks.
- While playing outside, watch each child and make one or two statements about his or her activity.
 - "You're climbing UP the ladder, and sliding DOWN the slide."
 - "I am going to lift you from your chair into the swing"
 - "You're pushing the shopping cart. What are you shopping for?"

Daily Routines

- While setting up their cots for naptime, let children help and comment on their sheets or blankets.
 - "You have Barney sheets."
 - "Use your hand to find the side of your cot."
 - "That's a pretty blanket. What color is that?"
- During meals, talk or sign about the foods everyone is eating. For example,
 - "What are we having today?" Wait for children to respond, and then continue talking about the food they are eating.
 - "I like apples. Where do apples grow?" Wait for children to respond, and then offer, "They grow on trees. What other foods grow on a tree?"
- During clean-up, offer children a choice of which area they would like to clean-up. Ask, "Would you like to pick up the cars or put the books away?"

Book Activities

- When a child points to pictures in a book, ask open-ended questions such as, "What are they doing?" "Who is that?" "Where are they going?" or "Why did they do that?" This can open up a lengthy conversation about what they see in the book.
- During circle time, allow children to choose books that you will read together. Let two or three different children make their choices each day as everyone is getting ready to sit down.
- Describe in detail what color's, shapes, or actions are on each page

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Commenting and Labeling



Commenting and Labeling

What is Commenting and Labeling?

- Describing the actions in which a child is involved.
- Naming or describing the toys or materials the infant or toddler is playing with.
- Talking or signing about activities or objects in which the child has shown interest.
- Talking or signing about activities in which the caregiver and child are mutually engaged.
- Describing what you are already doing with the infant/toddler during care routines.

Why are Commenting and Labeling important?

- When you comment and label, you give children opportunities to hear how we talk or see how we sign about our surroundings and our actions, and you teach the correct labels for the actions and objects a child sees or plays with.
- When children hear more words, hear how words are used, and see how people communicate their needs and wants, they will be more likely to use gestures, vocalize, and use words to communicate their needs and wants.
- As children communicate more, they are more likely to get responses from others and will have more opportunities to practice communicating.

Ways to Comment and Label.

- Name the toys or materials to which the infant or toddler is attending or is using.
- Describe the child's actions as they are doing them or as you are helping the child do them. Be the "narrator" for children's actions.
- Label colors, shapes, sizes, or other descriptors (e.g., in/out, big/small, up/down, open/closed, fast/slow, warm/cold, on top/under, loud/quiet, etc.).
- Talk about what you are doing or what children are doing during daily routines, such as diapering, meals, or clean-up.

Commenting and Labeling

For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words

Play Activities

- When a child is playing ball, you can say, "Playing ball" or "bouncing so high."
- When you see two children playing with blocks, you might say, "A tall tower!" or say, "Uh-oh, fall down" as the blocks fall.
- During free play, notice what children are doing and say one thing about it. For example, "You're crawling!" "Up!" or "Fell down."
- When an infant is playing in a bouncy seat, comment about what he/she is playing with.
- When an infant is positioned near a window, comment on what he/she might see outside the window by saying, for example, "I see a bird!"

Daily Routines

- While changing diapers, you might name the child's body parts. For example, "Toes," "Knees," or "Your tummy."
- While diapering or changing clothes, describe what you are doing as you do it. For example, "I'm taking your diaper off," "Here's a clean diaper," or "Let's clean up, then we can go play."
- During bottle feeding, snacks, or meal times, name the foods. For example, "Yummy apples," "Spoon," "Time for a bottle. You must be hungry." Or "Push the switch to tell me more."
- While putting on coats to go outside, talk about what you are doing. You might say, "Coats on," or "Hat on."
- You might also talk about the pictures on children's clothing or coats. For example, "You have Spiderman on your shoes," or "Katie has red flowers on her shirt."

Book Activities

- Talk or sign about the pictures in books. Some children may not attend to an entire story, but might be more interested in looking at and talking about some or all of the pictures. Describe what characters are doing, with whom they are interacting, where they are going, etc. For example, "The boys and girls are playing ball," or "That's so funny. The dog is wearing a hat!"
- While looking at books together, comment on the story as you read it. Rephrase what characters have just said, or reframe what is going on in the story. For example, "The bird is singing. He must be happy."
- Name the objects to which a child points or help the child point. For example, "That's a house."
- Make up stories to go with picture books. For example, when looking at a book containing pictures of people, talk about who the people are, what they are doing, how they feel, etc.

Commenting and Labeling

For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

Play Activities

- While playing in a sand box or sand table, you notice that the children are pouring sand through funnels and from one container to another. You might say:
 - "You're pouring the sand in the bowl."
 - "Deandra has filled her bowl with sand."
 - "The sand feels cool on my fingers."
- During free play, comment on children's activities and describe what you are doing with the children.
 - "You're building a tall tower!"
 - "We're making some yummy cookies"
 - "We're making music!"
- During finger painting, talk about each child's pictures. Comment on what you see, such as, "That's a big tree," or "It looks like you're mixing all the colors together." Label the colors, too. For example, "Alex is using green."
- While outside, comment on children's actions. For example, "You're climbing so high," or "You can run so fast."

Daily Routines

- During the transition time between lunch and nap when children are getting their cots and blankets ready, comment on what children are doing. For example, "Tyler is already done putting his sheet over his cot," or "Maria has an Elmo sheet."
- At the beginning of meals, name what foods children will be eating. "We're having noodles and apples." Throughout the meal, continue to comment on children's interests or label food as they eat it. For example, "Sierra has finished her apples," or "Rabbits like to eat carrots."
- While dressing or diapering, label body parts. For example, point to or touch a child's knees and say, "Here are your knees." If a child points to a body part, label it. "Your toes. Those are your toes."
- During clean up, comment on what children are doing. For example, "Oh good, you're putting all the animals in the box," or "Devin, you're finding all of the puzzle pieces."

Book Activities

- When looking at books, you might describe what is going on in the story. Describe the actions of the characters or other elements in the pictures.
- Label the colors or shapes you find in a book. For example, "That's a red truck," or "That house looks big."
- As you look at books together, label the characters' actions or name objects you see in pictures. For example, "The cat is sleeping on a bed," or "There's the dump truck."

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Imitating and Expanding



Imitating and Expanding

What are Imitating and Expanding?

- Imitating is repeating or signing a child's vocalizations or words or signs back to the child.
- Expanding is repeating or signing what the child has just said and adding new information. That is, imitating what a child has said, as well as using additional words or signs.

Why are Imitating and Expanding important?

- Imitating a child's vocalizations or words shows the child that he or she was heard and understood. Children are more likely to communicate in the future when care providers are responsive to their communication.
- If a child's vocalizations or words are unclear, imitating allows the child to hear the correct form of communication. When imitating or expanding, use the correct form of words. Avoid repeating back incorrect grammar.
- Expanding on what a child says can be an effective way to teach new information while providing more opportunities to hear language.
- By imitating and expanding on children's language, caregivers are being responsive to children's communication and encouraging further communication.

Ways to Imitate and Expand.

- Imitate the child's vocalizations. For example, if the child says, "ahhh," make eye contact and repeat back, "ahhh." Often, an infant will repeat this sound back to you again. You can imitate the vocalization a second time, and a third time, promoting reciprocal or "back-and-forth" interactions.
- With children using single words or signs or approximations of words or signs, imitate the child's words or signs, but use their correct form. For example, if a child says, "ba ba" to ask for a bottle, say "bottle," or expand on that vocalization by saying, "Bottle, please."
- Expand on what a child says by imitating the general idea that the child expressed, and then add more to that communication. For example, if a child says, "car," the caregiver might say, "Yes, that car is driving fast."
- Teach children the different names of a particular object. For example, if a child says, "My tummy," respond with "Yes, that's your stomach."
- When imitating a child's approximation of a word, rather than repeating back the child's approximation (child says, "lello" for yellow, or "wa wa" for water), repeat back the *correct* form of the word (e.g., "yellow" or "water"). This teaches the correct form of the word. You can also expand on what the child has said. For example, "yellow cup" or "drink of water."

Imitating and Expanding *For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words*

Play Activities

- Imitate the sounds infants and young toddlers make. If the infant says “ba ba ba,” smile, make eye contact, and say “ba ba ba.” This responsivity may prompt the child to make more vocalizations. As long as the child is making sounds, keep imitating those sounds.
- While playing with dolls, you say, “Baby is going to sleep.” The child might imitate you and say, “sleep”. Repeat what you said to the child, “Yes, baby is going to sleep.”
- While finger painting, the child may say “paint”. Expand on this vocalization by saying, “Yes, green paint.”
- A child points and says or signs, “car” while watching cars through a window. Respond to the child by saying, “Yes, that’s a fast car.” Use this to begin a lengthier “conversation” about cars.

Daily Routines

- A child says, “diaper” after you tell the child “It’s time to change your diaper.” Expand on the child’s utterance by saying, “Yes, time to change your diaper.”
- A child says, “ju” while pointing to a pitcher of juice. Say “I want juice, please” thus modeling the correct way to ask for juice while serving juice to the child.
- While playing outside, a child says “ba” while throwing a ball. Expand on what the child has attempted to say with, “Ball, that’s a red ball.”

Book Activities

- A child comes to you holding a book, and says “book.” To expand on this you might say, “You want to read this book about dogs,” Then, sit down with the child to read the book together.
- While looking at pictures in a book, children point out different pictures and make vocalizations that sound like the objects to which they are pointing. Using the pictures as an indicator of what the child is trying to say, name the objects to which the child is pointing. For example, when a child points to a dog and says, “woo woo,” respond by imitating and expanding on that. “Woof woof, that’s what the dog says.”
- A child points to a picture of a child riding a bicycle, and says, “Bike.” Expand on what the child has said by saying or signing something about the picture and the story. For example, “Yes, he’s riding a bike to school. Where is he going on the bike?”



Imitating and Expanding *For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations*

Play Activities

- While doing a puzzle with pictures of different types of trucks, a child names the trucks as he or she puts them in the puzzle. If the child says, "Fire truck," you might say, "Yes, that's a red fire truck. Do you see the ladder on the side?" If the child says, "ruck," you might say, "yes, that's a dump truck. See the rocks in the back of the truck?"
- While building a tall tower with Lego blocks, a child says, "I build a tower." Expand on this with, "Yes, you're building a very tall tower. It's a skyscraper."

Daily Routines

- While a child is wiping a table, he or she says, "I cleaning." Expand on this with, "Yes, you're cleaning the table so nicely."
- A child who is picking up toys says, "clean up." This can be expanded up on by saying, "Yes, its time to clean up. You're picking up the train set."
- While getting dressed, you ask a child to hold out his or her arms. The child says, "arms." Expand on this with, "Yes, these are your arms, and here are your hands, your elbows, and your shoulders," while pointing to each body part.

Book Activities

- As children read books, listen to what they are talking about and respond by imitating or expanding on what they are saying. For example, a child reading a book about birds might say, "Big bird." Expand with, "That is a big bird. It's an ostrich. They don't fly because they are so big."
- A child comes to you with a book and says, "Book," respond with, "Yes, let's read the book." Then, read the book with the child.
- While looking at books, imitate what a child says, and then expand by talking about the story or the pictures in the book. For example, while reading a book about boats, imitate what the child says, and then give more information about the specific type of boat or ask questions about the story. "This is a sail boat. The wind makes it go. That one is a fishing boat. They catch fish on that boat. What kind of boat is that?"



NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Asking Open-Ended Questions



Asking Open-Ended Questions

What are Open-Ended Questions?

- Questions asked in a way that allows children to respond in multiple ways rather than simply answering yes/no or nodding their heads.
- Questions such as *what*, *who*, *where*, *how*, and *why* questions.
- Questions that allow more than a simple “yes” or “no” response.

Why are Open-Ended Questions important?

- Open-ended questions provide multiple and varied opportunities for children to practice communicating.
- Asking open-ended questions allows children to respond with a wide variety of both verbal and nonverbal responses, which may promote sustained and new interactions.

Ways to ask Open-Ended Questions.

- Ask questions that are related to the child’s play (e.g., “What are you playing?”)
- Ask questions during routine care (e.g., “Where’s your mouth?”)
- Ask questions to allow a child to direct the play or activity (e.g., “Where should we go now?”)
- After asking a question, pause and wait for the infant/toddler to answer. If they do not answer, fill in the answer yourself.
- When using questions with children who may have difficulty learning language, it may be necessary to provide additional support. For example, the adult may provide choices for the child (e.g., “What do you want? Do you want the ball or the blocks?”). Another example includes providing a lead-in cue for the child to respond (e.g., “Where is the ball? It’s under the ...”).



Asking Open-Ended Questions

With Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words

Play Activities

- Notice what a child is playing with and ask, "What are you doing?" or "What is that?"
- When a child is playing with farm animals, ask, "Where is the horse?" or "can you feel the tail on the horse"
- If a child is looking out the window, ask, "What do you see?"
- When playing with stuffed animals and familiar characters, hold up a character and ask, "Who's this?"
- As a child holds a piece to a shape sorter, ask, "Where does it go?"
- If a child is playing with noisemakers, ask, "What sound does this make?"

Daily Routines

- During diapering, ask questions about body parts, such as, "Where is your belly?"
- After a routine is well established, pause during the routine and ask, "What's next?"
- As a child enters the room in the morning, ask another child, "Who's that?"
- During mealtime, ask, "What are you eating?" or "How's your snack?"
- When a child is sitting down for a snack/meal, ask, "Who is that next to you?"
- During clean-up time, ask, "Where does this go?" or "Which toy are you going to put away?"

Book Activities

- When a child sits in the book area, hold up two books and ask, "Which book do you want?"
- When looking at books, allow the child to choose where he/she wants to sit by asking, for example, "Where should we sit to look at books?"
- If a child looks at a picture in a book, ask, "Where is the duck?"
- If looking at a photo book, ask, "Who is that?" or "Where's Sarah?"

Asking Open-Ended Questions

With Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

Play Activities

- When starting an activity with a child, ask, “Who should we invite to play with us?”
- During outside play, engage in play with the children and ask questions such as, “Where should we go next?”, “What should we make with the sand?”, and “What should we do with the ball?”
- If a child is playing with blocks or constructive toys, ask, “What are you building?”
- When beginning an art activity, ask, “How are we going to make this kite?”
- After a block structure falls down ask, “Why did it fall down?”
- While a child is completing a puzzle, notice the piece they’re picking up and ask, “What is that?” or “Where does that piece go?”

Daily Routines

- After a child enters the room in the morning, ask, “Which friends did you say hi to?”
- While diapering, ask about body parts, such as, “Where are your ears?”
- During toileting/hand-washing/grooming routines that a child is learning to complete more independently, pause and ask, “What’s next?”
- During mealtime, ask questions such as, “What are you eating?” “How does that taste?” “What is your favorite snack?” and “Who are you sitting next to?”
- During transitions, standing in line, or walking in the hallway, ask, “Who’s in front of you?” “Where are we going?” and “What animal should we pretend to be?”

Book Activities

- Ask about the pictures in the book: “What do you see?” and “Where’s the boy?”
- Ask questions about the main idea of a picture such as, “What’s happening here?” and “What are these animals doing?”
- Ask questions to allow for predictions: “What’s going to happen next?”

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Giving Praise and Positive Attention



Giving Praise and Positive Attention

What is Praise and Positive Attention?

- Making positive comments about a child's behavior and communication
- Encouraging children in what they are doing, such as sharing, playing nicely with other children, following directions, and cooperating with others.

Why is using Praise and Positive Attention important?

- Using positive attention with infants and young children is important for communication development. It reinforces their use of gestures, vocalizations, and words.
- Positive comments, smiles, and nonverbal interactions such as a rub on the back inform the child that they are doing something important.
- When you use positive comments after children use vocalizations, words, and other methods of communication, a child is more likely to use them again in the future.
- Positive attention for communication and other prosocial behaviors creates more opportunities for children to practice and develop those skills. Negative comments such as, "No!" and "Don't do that!" keep children from wanting to communicate with you and limits their opportunities to practice language.

Ways to give Praise and Positive Attention.

- Opportunities to use positive attention and praise are available throughout the entire day. These times include free play, mealtimes, transitions, and routine care such as changing diapers, putting on coats, and washing hands.
- Positive attention can be given for specific behaviors, such as following rules, playing nicely with other children, and helping other children. It should also be given for children using communication with caregivers and other children.
- Notice when a child is using communication to let you know what they want, then give him/her attention and respond to their behavior.
- Positive attention includes giving the child a smile, hug, or pat on the back, or verbally responding to their actions by saying, "You are playing so nicely with your friends" "Thank you for using your words to tell Eli what you want" and "You did a great job helping to pick up your toys."

Giving Praise and Positive Attention

For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words

Play Activities

- When a child uses a word or sign to label something, give positive attention by responding to what they have just said and talk about it with them.
- Tell a child how nicely they are playing. For example, "Wow, look at how nice you are playing with the blocks."
- Give praise when a child gives another child a hug or a soft touch, such as, "Oh, that was so nice for you to give Kyle a hug."
- Playing with a child gives positive attention.

Daily Routines

- Give a child attention for holding their bottle or cup by themselves by saying, "You are such a big girl, holding your cup all by yourself."
- For infants, tell them how nicely they are lying while you are changing their diaper, such as, "You are waiting so nicely for me to finish with your diaper."
- Give positive attention as younger children are learning new skills, such as crawling, walking, or feeding themselves. For example, "Wow, look at you walking all by yourself."

Book Activities

- Notice when a child is interested in a book and give them positive attention by sitting with the child and looking at it together.
- When a child is looking at a book with you and points to or tries to label the pictures, label and name things with them. For example, "You just pointed to the truck. That's a big red fire truck."
- "Look, you are holding a book, let's read it together."

Giving Praise and Positive Attention

For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

Play Activities

- Give children positive attention for sharing their toys with other children. For example, "You are sharing your toys so nicely with your friends."
- Give positive attention when children follow directions. For example, "You put the toys away all by yourself."
- Give positive attention when children use good manners. For example, "Thank you for saying 'please' when you asked for that toy."
- Give positive attention to children for using their words when they have a problem or need help with something.
- Simply responding to children and continuing a vocal interaction or "conversation" is a form of positive attention.

Daily Routines

- Give positive attention to children for doing things on their own, such as putting their coat on by themselves. For example, "You put on your coat all by yourself, great job!"
- Respond with positive attention when children are eating nicely during mealtimes. For example, "You are using your spoon so nicely to eat your corn."
- When children are lying quietly during rest time, give them positive attention by rubbing their backs for a little while.
- During transitions, such as lining up to go outside, give positive attention to children who are waiting patiently. For example, "Thank you for standing so nicely with your hands to yourself."

Book Activities

- Notice when a child is interested in a book and respond with positive attention by sitting with the child and reading it together.
- When a child is sitting and reading a book nicely, let them know that you notice. For example, "You are sitting so nicely with your book; it looks like you really like it."
- Give positive attention to children when they are sharing their book and reading it with a friend by saying, "Thanks for sharing your book with your friend, that is really nice of you."

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Providing Choices



Providing Choices

What is Providing Choices?

- Structuring the environment in a way that allows children to choose from more than one activity or toy.
- Providing two or more objects or activities for a child to choose from means the child will need to communicate which toy or activity they prefer.
- Using a switch that will allow the child to choose from two or more toys or activities.

Why is it important to Provide Choices?

- Providing choices for children throughout the day encourages communication and language development.
- Giving choices allows children to choose an object or activity in which they are most interested.
- By choosing a preferred item, children are more likely to communicate about what they are doing by using vocalizations, words, or gestures.
- By having more than one object to choose from, children have more opportunities to practice communication and language by talking about things in their environment.

Ways to Provide Choices.

- In order to provide choices, toys and other classroom materials can be rotated so that children have the chance to play with a variety of toys, and may find them more interesting.
- Present the child with two objects and ask the child to choose one, allowing them to practice communication.
- Give choices only when children really have a choice. For example, "Would you like to play with the cars or the animals," but NOT, "Do you want to put the toys away before going outside?"
- It is helpful for children at the early language-learning stages to have some visual picture of their choices. When possible, hold up the choices or some visual representation of the choices to which children can respond.

Providing Choices

For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words

Play Activities

- Put a variety of toys out during play times, giving a choice of activities.
- Hold up two toys, a car and a doll, and let the child point to or reach for the object with which he/she wants to play.
- When a child is working on a shape sorter, present two pieces to the child and ask, "Do you want red or blue?"
- When putting music into the CD-player, hold up the CD containers and ask, "Do you want Sesame Street or Raffi?"

Daily Routines

- At snacktime/mealtime, present two options to a child and ask, "Do you want goldfish or apple slices?"
- During diapering, offer a choice of small toys for the child to hold. For example, "Do you want the car or the dinosaur?"
- If possible, allow a child to choose the color of the diapering pad by saying, "Do you want the green pad or the blue pad?"

Book Activities

- Hold up two books and have the child point to or reach for the book he/she wants to look at by asking, "Do you want the animal book or train book?"
- If structuring a book activity, offer a choice of seating. For example, "Do you want to sit on the floor or in a chair?"
- After reading a book, ask the child, "Do you want to read more books or build with the blocks?"

Providing Choices

For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

Play Activities

- Put a variety of toys out during play times, giving a choice of activities.
- When putting out blocks for playtime, offer a choice of two different kinds by asking, "Do you want the wooden blocks or the duplos?"
- When a child needs some direction in his/her play activity, offer a choice such as, "Would you like to play with the dinosaurs or the puzzles?"
- When structuring an art activity, offer a choice of writing utensils, colors, and/or materials. For example, "Do you want markers or crayons?" or "Which color paper would you like to use?"
- If a child is playing alone, offer him a choice of peers to invite to the activity: "Who should we invite to play? Should we ask Malik and Lily to play with us?"

Daily Routines

- During snacktime/mealtime, allow the child to choose which food he/she would like to serve first by asking, "Would you like the crackers or the apples?"
- During clean-up times, ask the child which toys he/she wants to put away by saying, "Would you like to put away the blocks or the cars?"
- During diapering, offer a choice of songs to sing. For example, "Do you want to sing 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' or 'wheels on the bus'?"
- Make cards with pictures that represent songs the child knows
- As a child is developing more independence with self-care routines, offer a choice of going alone or with an adult. For example, "Would you like to go potty by yourself or would you like for me to come with you?"

Book Activities

- Make a variety of books available to children throughout the day.
- During circle or small group activities, present 2-3 books for children to choose to read during that time. For example, "Do you want to read 'There was an Old Lady' or 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'?"
- Have children choose where they want to sit and look at books by asking, "Would you like to sit at the table or sit on a pillow while you read?"

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

Time Delay / Fill In The Blank



Time Delay / Fill in the Blank

What is Time Delay?

- Planning a delay during a predictable routine with a child that may serve to promote communication from the child.
- Giving children the opportunity to fill in the blank in a song or common phrase during a one-on-one time or a small group activity, such as circle time.
- Used during joint activities and when the teacher is following the child's interest so that it is more likely that the child will engage in the activity.

Why is Time Delay important?

- Children are allowed to demonstrate what they know and can say.
- It provides the young child with the opportunity to fill in a sentence or a song with words or vocalizations that they know and have used before.
- It provides young children with the opportunity to practice communication while having fun filling in the blank.
- It emphasizes the child's success while minimizing the need for teacher corrections.

Ways to use Time Delay.

- Pause when singing a familiar song to allow children to fill in the words. For example, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little ..." and "Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I ...").
- When looking at a book together, point to a familiar item and say, "I see a ..." and allow the child to fill in the common label.
- Anticipate when a child wants something, look at them expectantly, and wait 3-5 seconds. If the child doesn't initiate some communication, start a phrase for them, such as, "I want the ..." and let them fill it in. Or, model how to point to the item that the child wants. Once the child imitates the point, give the item to the child.
- Only use time delay when the child is familiar with the routine and knows what to expect. If the child doesn't communicate during the pause, simply model the word/phrase and continue. Your interactions should remain positive when children do not fill in the blank. After waiting for the child to fill in the blank, fill it in for them.

Time Delay / Fill In The Blank

For Children Using Vocalizations and Some Single Words

Play Activities

- Engage a child in a social game of peek-a-boo. After 2-3 turns, hide your face and say, "peek-a-____." Wait for the child to vocalize "boo." Once the child vocalizes, show your face and smile.
- Blow bubbles for the children. Hold the bubble wand to your mouth and say "ready-set-____," or "one-two-____." Once the child vocalizes or gestures to fill in the blank, begin to blow the bubbles.
- Leave a blank in a song you both know so the child can finish the song. For example, "Happy birthday to ____".
- When playing with pop-up toys or other cause-and-effect toys, establish a "ready-set-go" routine before each turn. After 2-3 opportunities, say: "ready, set ..." and allow the child the opportunity to vocalize or gesture to indicate "go."

Daily Routines

- Name food items during lunch by pointing to and labeling each food. After 2-3 labels, point to a food and pause to allow children to label the food item.
- Sing a familiar song during diapering, and pause to allow the child an opportunity to fill-in-the-blank. For example, "head, shoulders, knees and ...". If the child does not yet say the word, he/she may be able to simply vocalize or move his/her toes to gesture the correct response.
- Anticipate when a child wants something at snack, and allow him/her to fill in the blank to make the request.
 - The child wants more crackers, so you say, "I want more ____." If the child does not say, "crackers," or point to the crackers, that's okay. Just fill in the blank yourself.
- Let the child fill in the blank when he or she knows a visitor.
 - Susan arrives, and you say "Look, it's ____" and let your child fill in "Susan," even if it is not very clear.

Book Activities

- Pause when reading familiar books to give children the opportunity to participate in 'reading.' Use books that repeat the same lines often so the child learns the lines and can repeat them. For example, when reading Brown Bear, Brown Bear, the adult may say, "I see a red bird looking at ..." and allow the children to say "me."
- When looking at picture books or photos of classmates, the adult may point to a familiar picture and say, "Look, it's a ..." and allow the child to label the picture.

Time Delay / Fill In The Blank

For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

Play Activities

- Sing a song to the children and pause. For example, “three little monkeys jumping on the _____,” and wait for the child to fill in the blank before continuing on with the song.
- Once a child is engaged in a routine such as placing pieces of a peg puzzle into the puzzle board, establish a vocal phrase such as, “hi pig, hi cow, hi horse” as the child places each piece. After a few pieces are completed, begin the phrase and pause to allow the child to finish, such as, “hi ____”.
- Engage in some cooperative play with the child, such as handing blocks to a child one at a time. After giving the child a few blocks, withhold the block and wait for the child to request the block. The teacher may model “more blocks” for the child if necessary. Once the child requests the block, the teacher gives the child the block and continues playing.

Daily Routines

- When setting the table for lunch, pause before handing a plate to a child, waiting for a request for the plate. Or, the child can finish a sentence such as, “I want a”
- Anticipate children wanting drinks at snack. If a child sees juice and reaches for the cup in the teacher’s hand, the adult may model, “May I please have some_____?”
- Sing a routine song during hand-washing, and pause during the song to allow children to fill in the blanks.
- Allow children to label the sequence of diapering tasks or label body parts during grooming activities. For example, “These are your eyes, here is your _____.”
- Review classroom rules with the children and allow them to fill in the blanks of how to behave. For example, “In the hallway, we need to walk.”
- Let the child fill in the blank when he or she wants something.
 - The child points to a ball, so you say, “Can I have the _____?” and you let the child fill in “ball.” If the child does not say, “ball,” Just fill in the blank yourself.
- Let the child fill in the blank when he or she knows a visitor.
 - Susan arrives and you say, “Look who is here; it’s _____” and let your child fill in, “Susan.”

Book Activities

- Pause during familiar stories, such as before turning the page, to allow children to communicate what happens next. This should be used at meaningful points during familiar stories.

NOTES

How I use this strategy during play activities:

How I use this strategy during daily routines:

How I use this strategy during book activities:

Other Notes:

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