

Supporting a Child's Communication

Created by the Speech-Language Pathology Team at the School District of Onalaska

GENERAL TIPS

Here are some tips to help support your student's speech and language development from birth to five years old (and beyond):

Communicative temptation: create situations where your child needs to use a gesture, vocalize, or verbalize to have his or her needs met (e.g. game pieces). Model the choices available (e.g. "I have a blue piece and a green piece! I want blue").

Expanding: add a word or two to what your child says to make it more complex (e.g. child says, "go", adult can say, "time to go" or "let's go").

Read aloud: before reading, talk about what you know about the topic of the book. Look at the pictures together and talk about what you notice. While reading, explain new words, ask questions, and ask the child to retell the story (if age appropriate).

Recasting: repeat your child's phrase or sentence back with a slight modification (e.g. child says, "The doggy runned!", adult says, "Yes, the dog ran!")

Modeling and imitation: Model language for your child to imitate to help him or her produce words and sounds at appropriate times within natural contexts (e.g. saying "hi" to greet others, or "let's go" when leaving a place).

Build vocabulary: introduce and explain new words during everyday activities. Providing repetition, context clues, and connecting new words to real-world experiences will help build vocabulary.

Ask questions: posing questions about daily activities can help to encourage receptive and expressive language skills. Try to ask questions that require more than a "yes/no" answer.

Narrate everything: modeling your own speech and language can increase exposure to correct production and enhance a child's skills.

WHEN TO PRACTICE?

Incorporate the suggestions above into your family's daily routines. Times like snacks/meals, riding in the car, playing together, bathing/dressing, and nap/bedtime are great opportunities. Short, consistent practice sessions (10-15 minutes) are more effective than long, infrequent ones. Involve the whole family and make it fun!

