

ORAL LANGUAGE TIPS FOR PARENTS

As part of our online learning course we have been able access different websites and articles. Below is an excerpt form an article by Love and Reilly, two Australian speech pathologists, on how parents can help develop their child's oral language skills. Oral language is a reliable predictor of literacy development.

Key ingredients of positive parenting: the 4 E's

Engagement: Perhaps the most vital of the ingredients, engagement sets the stage for all learning, but particularly language learning. Children need the give and take of their parents interaction, accompanied by words, smiles and laughter. The convenient thing about engagement is that it can occur anywhere! Walking to school, waiting in the doctor's surgery, in the kitchen preparing a meal. Engagement is more easily achieved if parents are willing to follow the child's lead or attention and focus jointly on the activity or situation at hand.

Encouragement: Children need to be encouraged to explore and try out new ways of doing things. Persistence in the face of difficulty is a character trait that will assist them throughout their lives so we must remember to praise the child's effort and not just the successes.

Children need the ongoing support of their parents as they learn at school.

Enthusiasm: Whether it is cooking, gardening, doing homework, sport or eating healthily, children will respond to their parents' enthusiasm. Parents' enthusiasm about sharing the activity with their child, is particularly valuable as the child feels valued and included.

Enjoyment: Children are quick to perceive an adult's real feelings! Parents have many duties and demands on their time but the effort of finding opportunities to really enjoy shared time with children, will be rewarded. It may only be for a short time but sharing a special exclusive time with a parent sends a very powerful message to the child.

Practical ideas for shared time at home with an oral language focus

- look together at photos or videos of when children were young
- look through a magazine/junk mail
- sharing what you find interesting or funny
- alert your child to an article or picture in the newspaper that may interest them
- read books to or with your child. It is important for Fathers to do this too! Children are more likely to value reading if you show you do as well.
- retell a favourite story or one from your childhood
- visit the local library and choose books together both fiction and reference books
- make up a story from your own experiences or from when your children were little. For example: the day you lost your first tooth
- Turn off the TV and take turns to tell some NEWS from the day. Be careful not to dwell too much on the negative aspects of your busy day. Perhaps offer a topic such as 2 good things that happened in my day.
- Play talking/memory games such as 'I went to the zoo and I saw ...'
- Play cards or board games. Give the children opportunities to explain the rules and organize the games.
- Play read-made language activities that don't require equipment. For example: Flips & Fun Language Interactions to Prepare for School Success, (Love and Reilly 2008)