



Early Intervention



What Parents Can Do to Encourage Language Development

Learning begins at birth and encompasses all the interactions a baby experiences with people and the world around them. A mother’s calming voice, a sister’s squealing laughter, and a grandpa’s noisy yawn all provide cues to young children that become the beginning of learning to talk. Communication in all its forms is the essence of early literacy. Infants communicate by displaying emotion (i.e., crying). Toddlers utter simple sounds and often point. Gestures and sounds lead to first words. Learning to talk using a shared language opens a whole new world for children.

By listening to others talk and trying to make sounds, young children are preparing important pathways in their brain for learning more complex language skills. Reading aloud to children also influences the way young brains develop. Hearing a spoken language stimulates growth in parts of your child’s brain and starts the connections that will become the building blocks for reading. Learning a language allows us to connect with our world in powerful ways.

The experiences your baby or toddler has today with talking and listening can prepare them for learning to read and write in later years. The language spoken in your home is the language your baby needs to hear most. This builds a family connection that is essential for a child’s social and emotional development. You can help your child develop language and literacy skills during regular activities without needing special time each day. There are also things you can do during planned play and reading times. Show your children that reading and writing are a part of everyday life.

Talk to your child and name objects, people, and events. Repeat your child’s strings of sounds and add to them. For example, babies and young children often love to vocalize and repeat the same sound like “dadadadada, bababababa.” When they do this, you can join in the chorus and add a sound of your own.

Engage your child in singing and rhyming games. Instead of sitting in silence on your drive to day care, sing or share nursery rhymes with your child. Research shows that your child’s brain development is strongly linked to human interaction.

Read picture books and repeat stories with rhymes and similar sounding words and letters. Children request the same books over and over again because each time they are learning more and recognizing specific sounds that relate to images or words in the book. This builds their confidence that they are learners.

It also helps to talk to your child during daily routine activities, such as bath or mealtime, and respond to his or her questions. For example, with your baby in a high chair, you can set the table and name each object you place on the table. Describe the color and texture of objects, then let your child touch them.

See our resource list for more suggestions on encouraging your child’s talking.

IN THIS ISSUE

What Parents Can Do to Encourage Language Development	1
.....	
Check out our new Board Book Bags	2
.....	
Making the connections: How babies develop language skills	2
.....	
Resources for Supporting Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood	3
.....	
Illinois Calendar	4
.....	

Check out our new Board Book Bags

By Julia Perez

Parents who read to their children every day and talk about what they read together allow children to have rich literacy experiences and have fun at the same time. How can families encourage reading and activities at home? One way is

What's inside?
 3-5 board books
 1 parent book
 Suggestions for parent-led activities

to consider requesting one of our Brand NEW Board Book Bags, which are now available for checkout!

Families may like to work with their kids in between therapy sessions and other services. In addition to specific

activities your provider may give you, you can use these book bags as a resource for supporting your child's learning.

Each bag focuses on different topics to help you and your child interact with one another and build on skills they already know. Currently we have Board Book Bags covering these popular child development topics:

- gross motor skills
- fine motor skills
- speech development
- sign language
- feeding
- eating



- colors
- getting dressed
- sensory development
- ABCs
- opposites
- potty training

Each bag also contains a parenting book related to the topic and handouts with ideas for art, songs, and other activities that you can do at home. We hope you enjoy these board book bags and have fun with your child.

Julia Perez is a master's student in early childhood special education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Making the connections: How babies develop language skills

Anyone who has spent time with babies knows a lot about how language blooms from the time children are born. Because language development is such a critical focus in early development, parents need to know what to watch for.

Of course, babies develop language skills at their own pace, so there is lots of variability in this process. But we can describe how the sequence generally takes place.

At birth — Infants recognize the speech sounds used by their mothers and ignore other sounds

Birth to 6 weeks — Communicates mainly through crying and body language

6 weeks to 6 months — Coos

6 to 9 months — Babbles

9 to 12 months — Babbles in ways that mimic the intonation and rhythm of the speech of adults

12 months — First word

12 to 18 months — Speaks one word at a time, learns a few

new words each week

18 months — Begins to say two words together

18 to 30 months — Two-word sentences, then three words, then whole sentences; vocabulary grows rapidly with several new words every day

30 to 36 months — Uses long sentences with five to eight words and sings simple songs and familiar rhymes

Whether a child is learning in one language or two or even more, the biological, social, neurological, and cognitive foundations of language stay the same.

The brain does not learn words in isolation. Language is all about connections: the connections between sounds, the connections between meanings, and the connections between people.

Adapted from Nemeth, Karen. Many Languages, Building Connections: Supporting Infants and Toddlers Who Are Dual Language Learners. Lewisville, NC: Gryphon House, 2012.

Encouraging Bilingual Babies and Toddlers

Many families in the Early Intervention program speak different languages at home. This diversity is good for our communities, state, and society. By supporting bilingual families, we are helping children succeed. However, some parents have questions and concerns about children learning more than one language at once.



Should I talk to my child in my home language?

Yes. Talking to your children from birth is important for both emotional well-being and language development. Children who consistently hear two languages at home will learn to speak both. How fast they learn both languages can vary. They are most likely to start using the language of their mother or primary caregiver while still developing their other language.

Children benefit emotionally from knowing their home language. Children grow and learn best when they feel safe and secure. Building a connection with your home language will offer another way to let your child know they are an active, vital part of your life. Using your home language connects your children to you, the rest of their family, and their culture and community.

Research also shows that children who speak two or more languages also benefit in cognitive development. Speak your language with your child at home every day.

How can my child learn to talk in two languages?

Children become bilingual early from hearing more than one language at home or from hearing different languages in different settings, such as home and day care. Babies older than 6 months begin to show a preference for the language they hear most frequently. Children who hear and learn to talk in both English and another language may meet language milestones a little bit later than those with only one language. This is normal. Often bilingual children mix their two languages, and this is perfectly normal. Using words from both languages is quite common and actually helps children learn and sort out some of the vocabulary and rules in their brain. As they grow, they will get better at knowing the difference between the different languages.

What if I'm worried that my child's language is delayed?

Children who do not speak or who are very delayed in reaching expected language milestones may have a specific language disorder (SLD). If you're concerned your child may have one, then she should be evaluated in her dominant language. Research indicates a bilingual child with an SLD will display similar delays in both languages. Ideally, this child would receive intervention in both languages. There may be a therapist available who speaks your home language. If not, talk to your provider about specific activities you can do with your child in both English and your home language.

For more information on what happens during a typical EI visit, see the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eicclearinghouse.org>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Early Intervention.



Supporting Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood

The following books, articles, and videos are available from the Early Intervention Clearinghouse. Request them through your local public library, email us through the Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eicclearinghouse.org>, or call us at 877-275-3227. Visit our Web site to find more resources on dual language learners.

Books

Many Languages, One Classroom: Teaching Dual and English Language Learners: Tips and Techniques for Preschool Teachers.

Karen Nemeth. Gryphon House 2009. (PE 1128 .A2N21 2009)

Written with early childhood professionals and staff in mind, each chapter addresses a common question that may arise in a dual-language early childhood classroom. With a wide range of topics from assisting families in crisis who do not speak much English to addressing the needs of bilingual infants and toddlers with special needs.

Learning to Read the World: Language and Literacy in the First Three Years. Sharon Rosenkoetter and Joanne Knapp-Philo. Zero to Three Press, 2006. (Call # P P 118 .R814 2006).

A collection of journal articles addressing the issues of early childhood and the development of language and literacy. Provides a good understanding how language evolves from infancy through toddlerhood.

7 Steps to Raising a Bilingual Child. Naomi Steiner and Susan L. Hayes. AMACOM, 2009. (Call # P 115.2 .S822 2009).

This book is a resource for parents raising their child bilingually. Steiner and Hayes expose common myths about bilingualism, explain how the brain learns multiple languages, answer some frequently asked questions, and provide the reader with a variety of resources to help them along their journey of raising a bilingual child.

Videos

One Child, Two Languages in Action: Educating & Assessing Young Second-Language Learners. 120 minute DVD. Patton Tabors, Mariela Paez, et al. Brookes Pub Co, 2008. (Call # DVD P 118.2 .O54 2008).

This video discusses techniques for educating young children who are dual-language learners as well as demonstrating recommended methods of assessment.

Second Language Learning Environments at Home and School. 30 minute DVD. STARNET, Apples Video Magazine, 2007. (Call # DVD P 118.2 .S445 2007).

Embracing a child's first language at home and in the classroom is the foundation for successful acquisition of any second language. Becoming bilingual or multilingual is a necessity for some children and a privilege for all. This video inspires a positive philosophy and provides where-to-begin guidelines as well



as hands-on activities to create the environment that is absolutely necessary for strong development of a second language in young children.

Web Resources

National Dual Language Consortium (NDLC)

This Web site defines dual language, lists types and features of dual language education programs, contrasts what is considered a dual language program with what is not, and mentions what the program looks like as children progress through school. Links to additional resources and other organizations' Web sites are provided. www.dual-language.org

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

This Web site provides links to information about English language learning (ELL) education, bilingual education, immigrant education, two-way immersion, sheltered instruction, and teacher education. The site also provides links to projects and resources pertaining to each of the topics. www.cal.org

Articles

Enhancing Practice with Infants and Toddlers from Diverse Language and Cultural Backgrounds. Karen Nemeth and Valeria Erdosi. (2012). *YC: Young Children*, 67(4), p49-57.

The article discusses strategies for helping infants and toddlers from diverse language and cultural backgrounds adjust to early childhood care situations, focusing on practices that support children's home languages and help develop English language skills.

How Children Learn a Second Language

Author Linda Halgunseth writes a family-friendly article about how children have the ability to learn multiple languages. She explains the stages children go through when they learn a new language, describes the benefits of knowing more than one language, and suggests tips and ideas for parents to incorporate with their child to foster multi-language learning.

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/how-children-learn-second-language/>

Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse

Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820-7469

Family Outcomes Survey

Each year, Illinois is required to find out how effective the EI Program has been in helping families achieve outcomes. Early intervention is a family-centered system. Both children and families are considered to receive benefits from early intervention services.

We are striving to report whether families are getting what is intended from EI services. The Family Outcomes Survey helps measure the state's progress toward this goal. Family Outcomes are the changes experienced by the family as a result of early intervention services and supports. The family outcomes survey examines things such as understanding your child's strengths, abilities, and special needs and helping your child develop and learn.

This year the Family Outcomes Survey will be sent to every family that is enrolled in Early Intervention. If you receive a survey, please complete and return it. Your input can help improve the program!

Illinois Calendar

April 16, 2013
Springfield

Early Childhood Advocacy Day

Contact: Ounce of Prevention, 312-922-3863, www.ounceofprevention.org

April 26, 2013
Chicago

When Families are Special: Understanding the Dynamics of Parenting Children with Special Needs

Contact: STARNET Region V, 773-553-5596, www.StarnetChicago.org

May 2, 2013
Webinar

Transitioning from Early Intervention: Your Questions Answered

Contact: STARNET Region V, 773-553-5596, www.StarnetChicago.org

June 9–14, 2013
Jacksonville

Institute for Parents of Preschool Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. A one-week program held at the Illinois School for the Deaf.

Contact: UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children, 800-322-3722, <http://www.uic.edu/hsc/dscc/>

Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse

Early Childhood & Parenting Collaborative
College of Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Phone: 877-275-3227 (in Illinois)

Director: Susan Fowler

Editor: Kevin Dolan

Contributors: Sarah Isaacs & Nancy McEntire

Opinions expressed in *Early Intervention* are the responsibility of the author and are not necessarily those of the Illinois Department of Human Services or the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Early Intervention (ISSN 1058-8396) is published quarterly.