Early Communication and Language Interventions in Every Day Settings and Routines

Juliann J Woods PhD CCC-SLP & Mollie R. Friedman MS CF
School of Communication Science and Disorders
Florida State University

http://tactics@fsu.edu
Why focus on communication and language?

- Communication and language delays are the #1 identified disability for young children.

- Delays in language impact future social and academic skills, especially reading, and ultimately work force capacity.

- Children with delays in language development are at risk for using challenging behaviors as a way to communicate and get their point across. Early intervention serves as a prevention of future problems.

- Use of complex language makes us uniquely human…
Definitions and Descriptions….

- When I say caregiver ….
  - I mean you, team members, parents, extended family and friends… everyone that communicates and cares for the child

- Communication vs. language
  - Everyone communicates- gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, body movements, proximity…
  - Language is the symbolic representation of communication- e.g. words, signs, pictures that contain meaning. Language is learned as a tool for regulating behavior, interacting with others, and acquiring knowledge.

- Opportunities and interventions
  - Opportunities can be planned, spontaneous, systematic, incidental, meaningful or contrived…. For learning to occur they must be taken!
  - Interventions are the strategies used to provide or increase opportunities and to increase the child’s success and independence as a communicator

- Everyday activities and routines…
  - The stuff of everyday life… meals, play, hygiene, travel, shopping, tv or computer… not a schedule but the “things” that occur with or without a schedule where kids can or need to communicate; the context for your opportunities and interventions for communication and language development
10 Things You Can Do in 2010-

- Be deliberate in your communication approach to each child
- Be a responsive communication partner
- Be a strong social communicator and language model
- Establish predictable routines
- Teach language throughout the day
- Target communication to the child’s level
- Increase opportunities – more is better!
- Arrange environment to support interactions
- Use appropriate strategies and interventions to support the child
- Engage communication partners
1. Approach Communication Deliberately

- Language develops in a social and cultural environment.

- For many children, language development doesn’t just happen. It needs supportive and knowledgeable caregivers.

- The richest moments for early language learning are when the child is sharing attention, affect, and intentions; and the caregiver talks about the child’s focus of attention.

Language development needs you!
Communication Teaching Within a Tiered Instruction Approach

Tiered instruction uses:
- Individualized, Evidence based strategies to make Data based decisions through a Problem solving process

- **Specialized Interventions**
  - Individualized and more intense
  - Options for Tier 3 meet specific child needs

- **Targeted Interaction Strategies**
  - Arranged in the environment to occur more frequently
  - Embedded into curricular activities & in selected Tier 2 communication strategies

- **Responsive & Developmental Communication**
  - Predictable, joint action and daily routines
  - Following the child’s lead, interests
  - Fits into Tier 1 activities, strategies within your curriculum for all children
2. Be a Responsive Communication Partner (Tier 1)

- Developmental Responsiveness
  - Evidence supports this strategy as the most essential for development of prelinguistic and early linguistic communication
  - Builds upon positive caregiver child interaction
  - Provides opportunities to hear, see, engage and benefit from communication
  - Focus is on process-
    - Not the product

- General Principles:
  - Use developmentally appropriate communication
    - Child level, context match
  - Engage the child
    - Do what the child does
  - Provide attention
  - Follow the child’s lead
    - Observe, imitate
  - Expect participation
  - Respond… always
    - Turn taking, balance, expanding
  - Combine new and familiar routines
Being responsive means:

- Recognize and respond to the child’s current communication - Know the child’s strengths and skills
  - Babbling, vocalizations
  - Turn taking with actions
  - Gesture or signals
  - Bids for joint attention
  - Words, signs, combinations, early grammar

- Use multi modal communication
  - Joint attention
  - Voice, volume, pacing
  - Turntaking (waiting and filling)
  - Gesture, affect, actions
  - Words, combinations, sentences
  - Sign language or assistive strategies as needed

- Foster positive interactions
  - Get on the child's level (F2F)
  - Focus on child... provide attention and time
  - Balance turns
  - Listen... and assign intent when unsure
  - Repair communication breakdowns
How Responsive Are You?

Do you.....

- **Read child cues**
  - Notice his focus of attention and attempts to communicate- even if its hard to understand or read?

- **Respond to each of the child's communication attempts**
  - e.g. vocal, gesture, actions, or combinations,
  - in a timely and positive manner
  - that promotes another turn for him?

- **Scaffold engagement with environment**
  - building on the child’s focus of attention,
  - expanding play with objects, and
  - mediating actions and words within functional routines?
How would you be responsive?
3. Be a strong social communicator and language model

- Be a good communication model
  - Speak clearly with appropriate volume and pacing for the interaction
  - Position self to be face to face at the child’s level
  - Attend fully… look, listen, and focus on your partner
  - Match your language to child’s developmental level
  - Use extralinguistic and paralinguistic cues (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, volume, prosody) to support comprehension
  - Provide enough but not too much information
  - Close the interaction positively
  - Enjoy
  - Remember…. Children follow our lead too!
Communication Partner
Characteristics to Avoid…

- **Dominating** the interactions (Remember to balance turns!)

- **Preempting** the child’s turn (Expect communication!)

- **Not giving the children time** to formulate messages (Wait)

- **Failing to respond** to child’s initiations (Read cues)

- **Anticipating** the child’s needs and thoughts, making it unnecessary for them to communicate (Let him tell you!)

- **Using rhetorical speech**
  - “Are you ready? Tell me where this goes”
  - “Let’s try again, okay? Tell me what you want”

- **Using “Fills” and “Tags”**
  - “Let me see now…”
  - “Tell me what you want, alright?”

- **Double stating messages**
  - “What do you want?” “What do you need?”
Avoid “Empty” Words

■ What is an empty word? Find them in the following recently overheard caregiver statements….
  ■ “Here they are.”
  ■ “That one is for her.”
  ■ “Uh oh. Whoops.”
  ■ “Give it to me and then take that over there.”
  ■ “Yeah. You did it!”

■ What else could you say?

■ Use real words, descriptive words, synonyms…..
4. Establish Predictable Routines…
that facilitate communication

- Acts as a framework supporting “new” learning
  - predictable
  - repetitious
  - functional
  - logical
  - adaptable to individual variation

- Familiar framework allows child to focus on new skills, e.g. vocabulary, word endings, sounds

- Provides practice across the day in variety of settings!

- Motivating for child and adult – not “extra” but embedded and interesting!
Choosing Routines for Communication and Language

**General considerations...**
- Appropriateness of environment
- Time, materials, attention
- Proximity of caregiver
- Competing responsibilities

Considerations for each child or small group...

- Is it preferred by the child(ren)?
- Is it relatively brief?
- Does it occur frequently?
- Is it predictable?
- Does it provide multiple turns?
- Does it include interesting materials?
- Does it result in a positive outcome?
- Does it offer opportunities for interaction?
- Can varied skills be included?
- How much wait time between turns?
- Is there repetition within the routine?
- Is caregiver comfortable and confident?
Routines offer the most teaching and learning for children and adults when they are:

- Reciprocal
  - Joint attention
  - Reversible roles

- Expandable and contractible
  - Time and number of opportunities
  - Types and number of targets

- Logical and predictable
  - Provide “anchors” for adults
  - Give partners “markers” for turns

- Flexible for generalization

- Motivating

- Developmental (grow with child)
5. Plan to Teach Language Throughout the Day

- Provide a communication rich environment
  - Incorporate language throughout the schedule. It is a part of all curricular areas.
  - Talk about what is happening as it is happening (and what might happen next!)
  - Provide opportunities for SOCIAL communication (e.g. there is more to snack than labeling food items!)
  - Teach vocabulary by using diverse words in multiple and meaningful activities. Big words...big ideas!
  - Mediate the environment for the child
    - Scaffold child responses
    - Connect to current and previous experience
    - Provide cultural context
Sometimes children need targeted interventions and explicit instruction

- Example of a Tier 2 targeted approach in our teaching pyramid- Focused Stimulation
  - Child is exposed to multiple exemplars of a specific linguistic target (e.g. gesture, specific vocabulary item or grammatical form) within meaningful contexts
  - Following exposure, child is given opportunities to use construct in nonobligatory activities, e.g. to elicit spontaneous use
  - Can be used to promote form, function and content goals through deliberate manipulation of linguistic targets

- Useful with late talkers, language delay subsequent to environment deprivation, children with general DD, and those with Specific Language Impairments

- Can be integrated in play, storybook reading, small groups, pretend and caregiving routines

Example of Focused Stimulation

- Identify child target

- Model the new language skill
  - “baby + sleeping”
  - “sleeping”
  - “baby sleeping”

- Mentally prepare how the target can be embedded in the routine multiple times maintaining the child’s participation

- Consider and address any physical/sensory limitations that could hinder child’s participation

- Expand language target to additional examples and routines
  - Sleeping, jumping, running, eating, crying, hugging
When Using A Targeted Approach

- Identify specific communication target(s) for the child or group based on developmental sequence and classroom and family priorities.

- Introduce target systematically, 1 at a time, and provide multiple opportunities throughout the day and over several days. Monitor progress.

- Build upon current skills to teach new skills
  - Child can say: single words big and doll;
  - New Skill: attribute + entity (big doll)
  - Child can say: action + locative (sit down)
  - New Skill: requesting information (“Where sit?”)
6. Target Goals to Child’s Developmental Level

- Think about how the child is currently communicating (e.g. vocalizations, gestures, single words, multiword phrases) and comprehending what is said individually and in groups.

- Good targets are ones that represent the developmental “next step.” This requires us to think about the sequence of language development in order to identify what comes next for the child. This gets a little trickier at the multiword level, but resources can help us remember communication development looks like.

- Matching the child’s target to her developmental level is important because we don’t want her to get frustrated if we are expecting too much, too soon...or too little and too long! The better the match, the more likely it is that the child will learn and use those targets.
Developmental Communication Goals

**General Goals**
- Increase duration of engagement
  - Social (e.g., joint attention with other)
  - Physical (e.g., play with objects)
- Increase rate of communication
- Emphasize spontaneous, social initiations
- Increase diversity of communication
  - Same level, more forms & functions, across more contexts
  - Expand vocabulary
- Increase complexity of production and understanding
  - Higher level forms (e.g., gestures to words, increase length of word combinations, increase grammar)
- Increase independence

Adapted from Kaiser, A. 2009. EMT Training Materials
Theo’s Hand Washing Routine - Embedded Communication Targets

**Why Hand Washing for Theo?**
- Occurs frequently throughout the day
- Is brief and predictable
- Chance for 1-1 interaction with caregiver
- Meaningful and functional context

**What Targets Match Theo and Routine?**
- Joint attention, looking at partner, initiating action
- Request water, soap, towel, and Mom’s attention for a new game
- Take turns gesturing and imitating actions (e.g. point, wave, brush teeth)
- Initiate and imitate words (e.g. wave, label)
- Respond to directions
7. Increase Opportunities…
More is better!

- **We can increase opportunities by:**
  - Systematically **planning** for the child to have multiple opportunities to practice across various routines
    - If the child is learning words like on and off, he could practice while washing hands, he could turn off the lights for nap time and on afterwards, etc.
  - **Arranging the physical environment to maximize opportunities for interaction around materials**
  - Planning social games and activities
  - Setting up opportunities to practice with peers through roles in imaginative play

- **We can increase communication as a tool for learning by:**
  - Supporting the child to **take** the opportunities
  - Providing feedback to the child
  - Encouraging more…
    - Turns
    - Complexity
    - Diversity
    - Independence
8. Arrange the Environment to Support Communication

- Environmental arrangement (EA) is a specific strategy to increase communication that builds on responsiveness. Most EA strategies increase rate of requests and comments. (Remember, one general goal for children is to increase the rate of communication!)

- Get on the child’s level
- Join in with the child
- Provide materials that the child likes
- Follow the child’s lead
In sight, out of reach: When kids are motivated to get something fun, they will figure out how to ask for it!

Need for assistance: What happens when she can’t open the lid to that box of blocks she loves?

Forgetfulness: Parts are missing? The teacher can’t find the book? Terrific ways to engage the group in problem solving!

Small portions: Giving small amounts of a snack, limit manipulatives, etc. creates the need to ask for more!

Offer choices: Children love to control their environment, and this is one way to give them a little control while modeling language in a meaningful, functional way. (Hint: Make sure the choices are meaningful.)
9. Identifying Intervention Approaches and Strategies

- There are many evidence-based communication intervention strategies available to use in everyday environments. Evidence is essential in a Tiered approach.

- Key to success is the match between the child, the skill to be taught, the context, the careprovider and the instructional strategy used.

- Additional intervention strategies can be introduced as needed for the child’s success and to increase complexity of communication and interaction. More isn’t better if it isn’t needed!

- Coordination is essential for child and careprovider and the team. Consistency increases frequency and accuracy of opportunities for child.
Theo and Mom Hand Washing: Caregiver’s Intervention Strategies

Focused
Waiting, Need for assistance, Choices, Mirroring

Developmental & Responsive Strategies:
Predictable Routine, Face to Face, Attention, Interesting activity and objects, Talking about what is happening, Repetition, Turn taking, Roles, Follow child’s lead
Another EB Intervention Strategy: Enhanced Milieu Teaching (EMT)

- **Environmental Arrangement**
  - Child preferred activities
  - Arranged to encourage requesting
  - Use of materials to prolong engagement

- **Responsive Interaction**
  - Balanced turns between adult and child
  - Follow child lead in activity and communication
  - Model target language in context
  - High levels of semantically appropriate verbal responsiveness to child utterances
  - Expansions to target level utterances

- **Milieu Teaching**
  - Prompt language use in functional communicative context
  - Model, Mand + Model, Time Delay, Incidental Teaching
  - Functional consequences, positive feedback w/expansions, recasts

Milieu Teaching

- When a child clearly wants or needs something and is motivated to communicate to get it, we can also prompt kids to use more challenging communication skills.

- Once we know a child wants something, we can follow these steps:
  - Wait, and see what they do  (Time delay)
  - Ask open question like “what do you want?”
  - Give a choice where appropriate “Do you want juice or cookies?”
  - Then give prompt if child let’s you know what she wants…”say juice!”
Example of Time Delay

- Set up environment to promote requesting (routines, needs assistance)
- Look at child expectantly
- Hold up object or physically interrupt action
- WAIT ... up to 5 sec
- Reinforce child initiated responses
- Toys are in a clear container and child needs assistance to open container.
- Adult focuses on child, and waits.
- Child hands adult container.
- Adult: “open”
- Child: “open”
- Adult: “I open.” Give opened container to child.
Examples of Mand-Model

- A prompt for a communicative response
- All about real choices
- Arrange environment to provide choices
- Increasingly complex choices

- Adult: “What do you want for lunch?”
- Child: no response
- Adult: “Chicken or hot dog”
- Child: “chicken”
- Adult: “Say I want chicken.”
- Child: “I want chicken.”
- Adult: You want chicken for lunch.”
Examples of Model Procedure

- To teach new forms (vocabulary, syntax)
- To strengthen verbal imitation skills
- To introduce new sounds
- As a correction strategy embedded in mand/model and time delay

Adult: say “give me two crackers.”

Child: “Give two”

Adult: Say “give me two crackers”

Child: “Give me two crackers.”

Adult: “I’ll give you two crackers.”
KidTalk Tactics Project (KTTP)
EMT plus Routines based

- EMT: Large evidence base of over 50 studies that have shown improvements in child communication. Implemented by parents, teachers, and clinicians (Kaiser & Hancock, 2003; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006).
  - Many of the EMT studies were conducted with preschool age children who had at least ten words.
  - The current studies target younger children who may be prelinguistic in homes, child care and Early Head Start Centers.

- FGRBI demonstrated the value of implementing communication facilitation strategies across daily routines to increase opportunities across the child’s day (Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006; Woods, Kashinath, & Goldstein, 2004).

- Combined, the approach offers research-based language facilitation strategies that fit into the daily routines of families and educators. The combined model will be referred to as Kidtalk-Tactics, or KTTP.

- More to come....
10. Engage Communication Partners

- When language forms begin to expand, the need for multiple opportunities to practice language in familiar and social contexts increases.

- What do you do? Expand routines and partners!

- Increasing supported opportunities with peers, family and siblings increases frequency and functionality.
Supporting Play Partner Conversations: How to’s

- Be sure the peers are matched for language modeling
- Can read each other’s basic cues
- Are physically available to each other
- Are supported in the Interactions
- Are motivated by interesting materials and activities
- Have a role to play with balanced turns
- Have time to practice
- Have visual supports if needed
- Are encouraged for the participation

Support… don’t intrude.
Supporting Play Partner Conversations: Application of Strategies

- Mutual interest
- Face to face position
- Dinosaurs talk! And can use a variety of vocabulary...
- Fosters both symbolic language and play
Summary: Effective Communication and Language Intervention Is…

- Not just occasional but a thoughtful and planned system and sequence
- Frequently occurring in everyday routines and during the child’s interests with engaging partners
- A match between child targets, opportunities and evidence based intervention approaches
- Integral to the general curriculum activities and citizenship of the classroom
- Monitored and revised as needed
- A lifelong learning experience!

Learned any new words lately?
Putting it all together…
What can we do tomorrow?
Thank you so much.

Juliann and Mollie

Please visit http://tactics.fsu.edu

The End!