

PROMOTING HEALTHY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR CHILD

Children are born with the gift of sensing language and social interaction rules in their environment. Before they use words, they cry and gesture to express meaning. They often understand the meanings of others as well. A child's language development includes the skill to understand, listen to and speak to others. A child then develops the skill to understand written language, as well as read and write it.

Most often children learn the rules of language through use and over time. The rate that a child develops language can be affected by many factors. A child may focus more on developing a new physical or creative skill. A child may be learning a second language at home. The way other people respond to a child can also affect their rate of language development. Parents can nurture healthy language development by providing opportunities for their children to practice new skills during these important childhood years.

Here are a few ideas for you to incorporate in your lives at home:

- Talk while doing everyday things. Point out familiar places or objects. Describe and talk about items you see. Speak clearly. Pause for younger children so they may imitate and understand you.
- Read books, sing, and say rhymes with your child every day. As your child matures, have them predict what will happen in the story. Invite them to act it out or draw a picture. Ask "Who", "What", "When", "Where", and "Why" questions during the story or in conversation.
- Provide your child with writing materials and the time and space to use them.
- Go to museums, visit libraries, and do hobbies that broaden your child's knowledge of the world beyond their home and neighborhood.
- Encourage your child to ask questions. Show your child that you are interested in what they say. Be an active listener and respond to what they are saying.
- Focus on what your child is saying, not how they pronounce words. Constant correction of a child's speech is not productive. The goal of language development is to make positive connections with other people.

If you are concerned about your child's language development, seek advice from a specialist. They can determine if professional intervention is needed.