SIGNALS
Social-Emotional and Mental Health Development for Children and Teens

NAMI | Georgia
National Alliance on Mental Illness

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CENTER FOR EARLY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
AT GEORGIA COLLEGE
Language Acquisition: Strategies for Families

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Instructional Designer, Professional Excellence
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Georgia State University
Agenda

• Key Research Findings
• When does Language Acquisition Start?
• Building Language and Addressing Behaviors (Early Years)
• Building Language and Addressing Behaviors (Elementary School)
• Be your child’s advocate
What percentage of children are affected by language disorders at school entry?

A. 1%  
B. 3%  
C. 10%  
D. 25%

Use the pen tool to circle your answer.
Language Disorders at School Entry

- Not Affected: 90%
- Affected: 10%
What is the most important factor in reaching the expected levels in reading and math at age seven?

A. Language skills at age five
B. Language skills at age three
C. Ability to sit and listen
D. Ability to follow instructions

Use the pen tool to circle your answer.
A cohort study following 11,000 children from birth to adulthood found that those children with poor language at age five were:

- 4 X more likely to experience reading difficulties
- 3 X more likely to have mental health problems
- 2 X more likely to be underemployed in adulthood
In Utero: Development of Hearing

Ear Development

WEEK 9
In Utero: Development of Hearing

Ear Development

Process Sound

WEEK 9

WEEK 16
In Utero: Development of Hearing

- **Ear Development**: Week 9
- **Process Sound**: Week 16
- **Listen and React to Sounds Outside the Womb**: Week 23
Why the Focus on 39 Weeks?

If your pregnancy is healthy, wait for labor to begin on its own.

- Lungs and Liver
- Eyes and Ears
- Suck and Swallow
Why the Focus on 39 Weeks?

A baby’s brain at 35 weeks weighs only two-thirds of what it will weigh at 39 to 40 weeks.

If your pregnancy is healthy, wait for labor to begin on its own.
Read and Talk to Your Baby In-Utero!
Building Language: Birth to Five

Brain Development
How to Build Language
What Behaviors to watch out for
Brain Development: The Early Years

Synapse Formation in the Developing Brain
Infants: Brain serves as “Word Processor”

- Beats and sounds
- How a string of words fit together
- How sequence and intonation affect meaning
- How words are categorized by meaning
What might good Language Nutrition look like?
Language Nutrition = Receptive Language

Expressive Language
Talking: Importance of Serve and Return Communication
How might serve and return look different with older age groups?
Talking: Parentese

- Short and simple complete sentences
- Melodic tone and higher pitch
- Intonation varied by increasing pitch intensity and/or length
- Exaggerated gestures and facial expressions.
Increasing the Quantity of Words

- Greeting
- Narrating Actions or Activities
- Telling Stories
- Asking Questions (Closed/Open & Ended)
- Discussing Feelings and Emotions
Increasing the Quality of Words

**Introducing More Complex Words**

**TIER 1**
- *More simple...*
  - Words children are likely to be exposed to through everyday experiences

**TIER 2**
- *More rich and complex*
  - Help build critical language knowledge

Words:
- dog
- happy
- shout
- angry
- canine
- exclaimed
- elated
- furious
Interactive Storybook Telling

READ STRATEGY

R - Repeat the book
E - Engage and enjoy
A - Ask open-ended questions
D - Do More with the Book
Repeat the Book

Read the book several times over the course of 3-5 days.

1st Read: Focus on **events**
2nd Read: Focus on **emotions/thoughts**
   What do Characters think, feel?
3rd Read: As appropriate, **let the child tell the story** using their own words?
The line to get in to Ebbets Field snaked around Sullivan Place and up to Bedford Avenue. My dad let me hold my ticket. I clutched it for dear life.

Finally, we were through the turnstile. My dad held my hand as we moved with the rest of the crowd through the gloomy underbelly of the stadium, up the dark ramp. Then we tumbled into bright sunlight.
Engage and Enjoy

Keep children interested in the story.

HAVE FUN!!!

Point at, act out, and explain ideas, pictures, and words. Use theatrics (e.g., voices, sound effects, gestures etc.) to make the story enjoyable children.
Every day when Dad came home from work, he started asking me questions.
Not about school. About baseball. He wanted to know everything I knew.
Especially about Jackie Robinson.

“What’s Jackie’s batting average?”
“247,” I said.

“How’s that figured?”
I explained.

“What’s an RBI?” he asked.
“Runs batted in.”

“Fielding average. What’s that mean?”
I told him.

“You teach me baseball,” he signed.

“Okay,” I said.
One night, Dad came home with a baseball glove.

“Let’s have a catch,” he signed.
We tossed the ball back and forth until Mom called us for supper. Dad missed the ball every time. The only way he could hold it was by trapping the ball against his chest with both hands. That had to hurt, but Dad just smiled.

“Jackie never drops the ball,” he signed.
“He catches it with one hand. Not like me.”

All that week we practiced. Dad dropped the ball most every time. Even when I threw it underhand.

“Throw it regular,” Dad said.
Ask Questions

Ask questions that require more than a 1 or 2 word response.

Listen and respond to your child’s communication attempt.

Encourage your child to talk.
I couldn’t wait to get to the ballpark. But the whole ride I kept thinking, ‘There’s no way Dad can meet Jackie Robinson. Besides, Jackie doesn’t know sign language.’

How would they talk to each other?
Do More with the Book

Connect ideas from the book to the child’s life.

Engage in or create activities and events that relate to the book in the same way:

• Crafts, drama
• “Field Trips”
All that month, Dad and I followed everything Jackie did. We read and reread every report of every game that was printed in *The New York Daily News.*

Dad started a scrapbook. If there was any mention of Jackie Robinson, he cut out the article and pasted it in his scrapbook.

The scrapbook got thicker.
The Dodgers kept winning.
And the opposing teams kept riding Jackie Robinson.
But Jackie never reacted. He didn’t even seem to notice. And he never complained.
Singing
Playing
Developmental Milestones

- Social and Emotional
- Language and Communication
- Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, and Problem Solving)
- Movement and Physical Development

Resources Available to you:
- www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html
- Milestone Checklist
- Milestone Tracker App
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What do you think might be signs of language delays in infants through preschoolers?
Some Warning Signs of Language Delays: Infant to Preschoolers

- Not using language to express oneself
- Not using a variety of vocabulary words and grammar
- Not interested or engaged in reading
- Difficulty following one step directions or simple 2-step
- Behavioral dysregulation – pushing, hitting, aggressive
How can you help children that are behind?
How can parents help children who might be behind?

• Increase the Quality & Quantity of words
• Point out and label vocabulary
• Model or draw pictures of words, behaviors or instructions
• Break Instructions down into small steps
• Be consistent
Building Language and Addressing Behaviors (Elementary School)
Some Warning Signs of Language Delays: Kindergarten to 5th Grade

- Struggle with reading
- Avoid opportunities to read
- Difficulty following instructions
- Partially completing tasks
- Draw attention away from the language deficient
- Start to show less interest in other subjects
How can we help our children K-5?

- Build Vocabulary
- Develop a Growth Mindset
- Addressing Unwanted Behavior
- Consistency
Build Language K-5

Read! Read! Read!
Build Language K-5

Be Safe
Respectful
Responsible
If a child is struggling with a behavior or expectation:  

*Parents can draw a picture of the expected behavior:*

- Sitting at a restaurant
- Picking up toys
- Lining up
- Working on homework
Ability to remember and recall information has a higher correlation with academic achievement than IQ.

- Follow the Leader
- Simon Says
- Category Lists
- Playing matching card/letter games
It is important to have a Growth Mindset.

### Fixed Mindset

- Believe they cannot change their:
  - Character
  - Creativity
  - Potential for success

### Growth Mindset

- Positive outlook
- A child believes he/she has control over their successes and failures
- Look at tasks with a “go-getter” attitude
- Bounce back from challenges with an optimistic point of view
Growth Mindset: Change Your Language
To help develop a growth mindset in your child...

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## FIXED MINDSET!

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## GROWTH MINDSET!

- “Wow! You really worked hard on this!”
- “I know this is easy for you, but let’s try something more challenging to help grow your brain!”
- “I see you’re having a hard time with this. You didn’t get it the first try, so why don’t we use a different strategy?”
- “I know this was difficult, but your hard work paid off. Next time, we’re ready for a real challenge!”
Growth Mindset: Mistakes Are a Part of the Learning Process
Emotional Responses Can Make or Break Learning Opportunities
Addressing Unwanted Behavior: Mindfulness

**Mindfulness:** a simple technique that emphasizes paying attention to the present moment in an accepting, nonjudgmental manner.
Addressing Unwanted Behavior: Mindfulness

• Have Students Take a “Brain Break"
  o Take a deep breath and calm themselves for three to five minutes to quiet their minds, be present, and just focus
  o During homework time
  o During stressful situations

• Practice mindful awareness during everyday activities
What are some techniques that you have used to help when dealing with a behavioral situation?
Providing Simple Instructions:
Telling a child two simple things to do, have them repeat what was said and do them.

Wash your hands, get a toy.
Addressing Unwanted Behavior

• Have the child **draw** out their unwanted behavior
• The drawing should include **everyone** that was present during the behavior
• Have the child draw an **air bubble** above every persons head in the drawing and have them write out what those people are thinking while they are behaving in this way
Be Consistent
Advocating for your child

- Among children struggling to read;
- When behavioral problems are first emergent;
- When a child is at risk of suspension from school;
- When mental health difficulties are apparent;
- On first contact with the justice system; and
- In planning interventions following a conviction