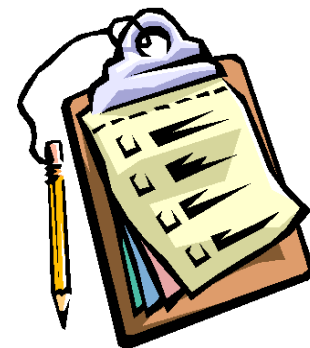# Supporting and Engaging Young Children with Communication Difficulties

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Agenda

- Background

- Four components of Supporting and Engaging Young Children with Communication Difficulties
  - Educator Skills
  - Environment
  - Creating Communication Opportunities
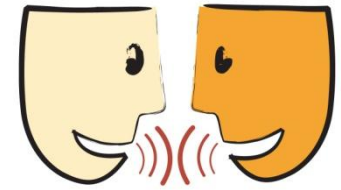 - Individual Child and Family

- Questions

Background

- One in seven Australian's have a communication disability.*

- Approximately 386,000 children have some kind of speech and language delay.*

- 577,000 school-aged children have difficulties with language.*

  http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Background

"A communication disability does not just belong to the individual. It belongs to the entire environment of which the individual is the focal point."

Sandwell – Communication Aids Centre, UK

Effective communication enables children to ...

Play and learn

Express their thoughts, opinions and personality

Make requests

Ask for, and receive information

Be heard and understood

Refuse or reject

Participate in community and social activities

Make decisions

Build relationships and make friends

Express and meet basic needs

Four Components of Supporting and Engaging Young Children with Communication Difficulties

Educator Skills	**Environment**
Creating Communication Opportunities	**Individual Child and Family**

Educator Skills

Adult Styles of Communication

- *The director* – tell child what to do and how to do it.

- *Tester role* – ask lots of questions to see what the child has learnt.

- *Entertainer role* – does whatever it takes to keep the child amused.

- *Helper role* – does everything for the child and doesn't expect much communication.

- *Mover role* – moving fast to stay on schedule.

- *Watcher role* – unsure how to interact and so watches or comments from a distance.

Educator Skills

The "Tuned In" Adult

- Is a skilful communicator.

- Models and promotes good listening skills.

- Gives children time and space.

- Adapts their language and approach to meet the child's needs, interests and abilities.

- Values non-verbal communication.

- Provides the correct forms of words sensitively rather than correcting children directly.

- Recasts when talking with children.

- Promotes conversational skills.

Educator Skills

The "Tuned in" Adult

- Provides opportunities for child to start interaction.

- Is responsive to child's communication and ideas.

- Pauses.

- Encourages active learning.

- Gives children specific praise.

- Considers the needs of children learning English as an additional language.

- Reflects on practice.

- Provides a language rich environment.

- Builds up and breaks down language.

Educator Skills

How can educators provide a language rich environment?

- Label toys /objects – helping to increase the child's vocabulary.

- Increase commenting and decrease questions. Comment on what you are doing, what the child is doing or what another child is doing.

- Encourage natural conversation.
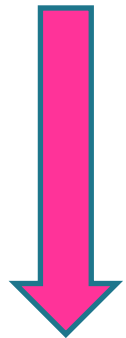
- Expand on the child's language.

Educator Skills

How can educators build up and break down language?
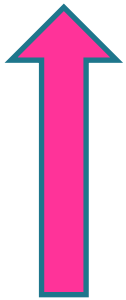
Build up language: add a little extra to help the child's language grow.

Break down language: simplify language to help children understand.

Educator Skills

Build up Language (language extensions)

Context	Child Says	Typical Adult Response	Much better if Educator says ...
3 yr old playing outside.	Look, slide!	Do you want to have a go?	Wow, it's a big slide.
4 yr old pretending to cook in role play area	Dinner's ready	Mmm. What's for dinner?	Mmm, dinner's ready to eat – I'm hungry.
6 yr old talking to educator	I like going to the park.	What do you like to do at the park?	
2 yr old playing in the sand	Bucket	Yes, bucket.	

Educator Skills

Break down language (simplify language)

Commonly asked questions or comments	Simplified version
Do you want a drink of milk?	Drink? Want milk? Milk or Juice?
It's time to go and wash our hands.	Wash hands
It's time to play outside.	
We're going to read a story, so sit on the mat.	

Educator Skills

The 4 S's

SAY less and STRESS

Go SLOW and SHOW

Educator Skills

Communication Friendly Environment

Create an environment:

- Where the child feels comfortable, confident, secure, welcome and has sense of belonging.
- That supports the building of relationships e.g. small group, pairs and one-to-one activities.
- Where there are quiet and distraction free areas.
- Where all staff and parents have a consistent approach.
- That is visually friendly.

Visually Friendly Environment

- Use of objects.

- Use of photos e.g. labelling of resources or for use when offering choices.

- Use of gesture or signing system e.g. key word signing.

- Use of symbols e.g. visual timetables, first and then, sequenced tasks, aided language displays, social stories.
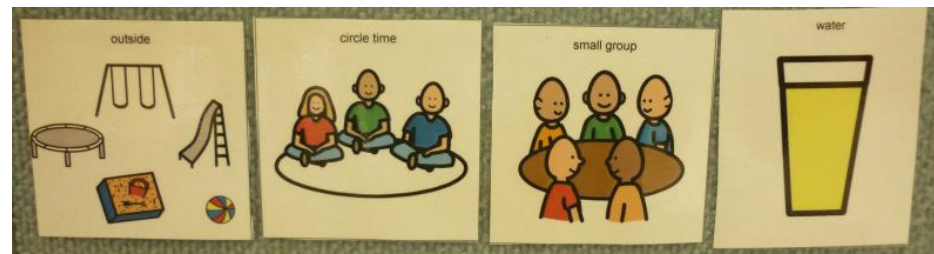
Environment

Misconceptions

Research and clinical practice have shown that augmentative and alternative systems (AAC) do NOT interfere with speech and language development.

Many children demonstrate an increase in language, speech and communication skills once an AAC system is introduced.

Creating Communication Opportunities

- Offer children choices.

- Have some toys on show but inaccessible so the child has to ask for them if they want to play with them.

- Wait for children to ask for help – set up situations whereby they can practice asking for help.

- Encourage children to be the messenger e.g. Tell the other children it is time to go inside.

- Create opportunities to chat.

Creating Communication Opportunities

- Set up an activity but purposefully forget to put out a key part so the child has to request the item.

- Facilitate social communication by modelling the social use of language and setting up opportunities for children to interact e.g. Model phrases such as "Can I play ?" or ask a child "Can you give this to... ?"

- Don't always anticipate – wait for children to let us know what they want.

- "Invite" strategy.

Creating Communication Opportunities

There are endless communication opportunities each day:

- Arrival and departure.

- Singing.

- Circle time.

- Looking at books and reading stories.

- Indoor and outdoor play.

- Snack time.

- Preparing activities and tidying up.

Individual Child and Family

- Each child is an individual.
- Use the child's interests and motivators.
- Make learning and communication fun!
- Think about the child's preferred style of learning and teach accordingly.
- Use the child's strengths to assist with their areas of difficulty.
- Differentiate activities.

Working with Families

- Make families feel welcome and enable them to feel a sense of belonging.

- Talk openly and honestly with parents.

- Listen to their concerns and respect their views.

- The parent /carer knows the child best but the educator has different knowledge and skills which are complementary.

- 'Kindergarten/School – Communication Books' can be helpful.

Questions

Useful Websites

- Good information about ages and stages of communication development
www.talkingpoint.org.uk

- Great project involving the creation of a visually friendly environment
www.symbolsinclusionproject.org

- Information about key word signing workshops
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/specialeducation/key-word-sign-australia/signingworkshops/victoria.html

- Fact sheets
http://www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/actnow/factsheet.html

Visual Resource Websites

www.dotolearn.com

www.visualaidsforlearning.com

www.sparklebox.co.uk

www.pecs-australia.com/

www.talkingmats.com

Reading

- It Takes Two to Talk: A Practical Guide for Parents of Children with Language Delay by Jan Pepper.

- More than Words: Helping Parents Promote Communication and Social Skills in Children with ASD by Fern Sussman.

- How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

Reading

- Working in Partnership with Parents: The Parent Advisor Model by Hilton Davis, Crispin Day and Christine Bidmead.

- Learning Language and Loving It. A Guide to Promoting Children's Social and Language Development in Early Childhood Settings by Elaine Weitzman.

- Visual Strategies for Improving Communication by Linda Hodgdon.