



Welcome Words

On Language and Literacy

Hello New Parent! We hope you will think of Welcome Baby Family Resource Center as your partner in parenting as you meet the wonder and challenges ahead. During the next twelve months, you will receive an edition of Welcome Words covering 6 special topics and including other resources you may find helpful. In addition to Welcome Words, Welcome Baby offers other services and classes that are described in our quarterly newsletter and website: www.welcomebaby.org. You are also invited to call us at 919-560-7341 if you have questions or concerns. Welcome Baby is a program of Durham County and Durham County Cooperative Extension. We receive support from Durham's Partnership for Children - a Smart Start Initiative and NCHHS-Department of Community Programs.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Babies are born with billions of brain cells called neurons. For babies' brain cells to grow, brain wiring has to occur—meaning a pathway has to be formed enabling neurons connect to each other. This connection happens when babies sense things, (the five senses; sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste). Exposure to language at an early age helps those neurons connect and thus fosters language and literacy development. By the time a child is three years old, 85-90 percent of their wiring is completed.

Extensive research has shown us that genetics and environment both play a part in brain development. Environment (interaction with other people, experiences), though, has the most significant impact on how our predispositions are expressed. Also how you treat your body during pregnancy can have adverse effects on how your fetus' brain develops. For example, alcohol or substance abuse, may slow development. The capacity of language is genetic but the particular language a child masters, and the way he/she ends up speaking, is experience and exposure based. Early language immersion and practice is a much-needed necessity for mastering the language and literacy development.



HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD USE LANGUAGE

Early language and literacy development takes place in the first three years and is closely linked to the child's exposure to books and stories (www.Zerothreeto.org) Language happens in stages - first, the child cries to get their needs taken care of, then they start to babble, followed by making individual sounds and then next is stringing sounds together to formulate words. Then as toddlers they start putting words together to make sentences. During all these stages we should respond to our children by engaging in language exchange with them. When they cry, you respond to their needs thus making sure that communication for needs continues. When they babble you babble back. Research has also shown that children's knowledge of language, reading and writing happens before they start school. This makes you, the parent, your child's first and best teacher.

WAYS TO FOSTER LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Read or sing nursery rhymes to your child; the repetition in nursery rhymes helps them with the language flow.
- Use expressive body language when reading/telling stories or talking to them. Act surprised, frightened, happy as a story calls for. This helps with the naming of feelings and emotions, and the nonverbal language skills.
- Name body parts; as you change your child's diaper talk to them about what it is you are doing. At times you have to act like a sports announcer saying everything that you are doing out loud for your child to hear.
- Name and point at objects around the house.
- Have play time with your child
- Talk to your child like you were talking to an adult. Use of baby language only confuses their learning mind as what the proper pronunciations of the word should be.
- Have less television time, or try to limit the television viewing to educational programs making this special time.

All these activities not only help with language development, but, also foster literacy development.

Check out these resources:

- www.Zerothreeto.org/brainwonders
- www.education.ne.gov/ech/ELGLL.pdf
- National Center for Family Literacy



LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN STAGES

As a parent your important role is to make sure that your child masters all the developmental skills. Understanding what happens when, can help you succeed. It is important to remember not to over do it by pushing your child and having too high expectations on both them and yourself. Make sure that whatever learning/developmental activity you involve your child in remains fun for the both of you.

Remember to acknowledge the child's current level of communication and build on that.

Pre-linguistic Stage: 0– 10 months

- Cries to communicate needs.
- Makes noises
- Babbles
- Makes eye contact
- Responds to name
- This is the beginning of speech perception.

One-word Sentence: 10 –13 months

- Child starts using single words. The meaning of the word all depends on what is going on at that time.
- Child begins to identify sounds with particular objects.
- Words with vowels such as dada, baba, start to come out.

The Two Word Sentences: 13—24 months

- Increase in words acquired
- Start hearing a lot of No!
- This is the start of sentence formulation.

Multiple Words Sentences: 2—2 1/2 years

- Child starts forming sentences
- This is the onset of grammatical development
- Ex: "I want ball"
- Repeats words spoken by others

Complex Grammatical Structures: 2 1/2—3yrs

- Starts using past tense, pronouns
- Sentences structure gets longer.
- Ex: "I want ball now!"
- Can identify body parts
- Starts asking questions
- Vocabulary expands up to 500 words

Adult-Like Language Structure: 4 –6yrs

- Question-asking reaches its peak
- Fluent speech
- Self expression increases
- Starts to recognize simple words in books.



SHARING BOOKS WITH YOUR TODDLER

- Sharing of books has to become part of your daily routine. It is easy to incorporate during bedtime.
- Start with books with large pictures and bright colors.
- Use books with objects that you can help your child name.
- Books with photos of activities that your child does are good, maybe on a daily basis, such as eating.
- Use books that have repetition and tell simple stories.
- Use books that aid in counting, alphabet, shapes and sizes
- Use books that teach emotions, putting words with the emotions.
- Read books that teach manners.
- Make sharing book time fun and, if at all possible, let the child pick the book.
- Act out the story and exaggerate where possible.
- Let the child turn the page if he is able.
- According to the American Pediatric Association reading to children helps aid brain development.

