

## Handouts

# Promoting Language Development in Toddlers and Preschoolers



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by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

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## *Promoting Language Development in Toddlers and Preschoolers*

### **Practice Activities**

#### *To Do:*

- **ENGAGE** in child-directed play interactions and interactive reading using descriptive commenting, imitation, and repetition to enhance language.
- **MODEL** using two different non-verbal signals or gestures with your verbal communication.
- **PROMPT** children's nonverbal and verbal responses and praise their responses.
- **FOR PRESCHOOLERS: TRY** using visual cues and gestures to prompt verbal responses from children with language delays. Set up play practices to promote verbal social communication interactions.

#### *To Read:*

Chapter Five from *Incredible Teachers* book.



## Key Points

# Promoting Language Development in Toddlers and Preschoolers



### Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Be child-directed.
- Use many more descriptive comments than questions.
- Describe body parts, actions & objects; use the “one up rule” of adding one word longer than the child’s current word production.
- Listen to the child and imitate his/her sounds and words with positive affect.
- Talk about positions of objects (e.g., inside, under, beside, next to, behind).
- Prompt the child to talk by modeling words for him/her to copy.
- Chant, sing rhymes and teach child body movements that go with songs and words.
- Describe your own actions.
- Use pretend play and puppets or toy telephones to encourage language interactions.
- Use “teacher-ese” language which is words spoken slowly, in a higher pitched, exaggerated playful voice with positive enthusiasm and lots of repetition.
- Combine nonverbal hand gestures with verbal communication.
- Pace language slowly so children have a chance to respond verbally or nonverbally.
- Use visual picture supports for children with expressive language delays.
- Praise children’s nonverbal and verbal responses.
- Read to children using interactive approaches.

### Additional for Preschoolers

- Increase language word complexity.
- Engage in pre-academic coaching: describe colors, shapes, numbers, textures & letters and increase the variety of words by providing more detailed descriptions of objects, people or animals.
- Help children pay attention to the language of peers and make sense of their information by repeating what another child says (intentional commenting).
- Combine descriptive commenting with social interaction experiences.
- Use interactive reading approaches by allowing children to act out parts and share experiences.
- Encourage children to practice telling their peers what they want and to share their ideas and plans.
- Encourage parents to use descriptive commenting, interactive reading and pre-academic coaching at home.

# *Brainstorm/Buzz*

## *More Encouraging Words*



Write down some encouraging words and some visual prompts you can use with children to facilitate their ongoing language and social communication.




**Goal:**  
I will commit to using more encouraging words/visual prompts \_\_\_\_\_ times this week with the following children:

# *Brainstorm/Buzz*

## *Nonverbal Cues*



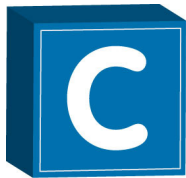
Write down some nonverbal cues and gestures you can use with children to promote communication.



Lined writing area for notes.

***Goal:***

# Building Blocks for Reading With CARE with Toddlers



**Comment and describe objects, colors, body parts, emotions, and actions of pictures in books.** Talk about the pictures while you point to the pictures and/or make up stories. Take turns interacting and let your child turn the pages and point to pictures while you name them. If the child doesn't have much language yet, remember toddlers understand much more than they can speak. Mirror and imitate the sounds the child makes and use simple words to describe objects. Read for a few minutes at times when your toddler seems calm and alert.



**Ask a few open-ended questions and explore the book together.**

You might try asking a few open-ended questions to see if the child will talk. For example, you might say, "I wonder what will happen next?" Or, "Do you think he is proud of doing that?" However, avoid asking too many questions or the child will think you are testing her/him and will close up if she/he doesn't know how to answer the question. Rather ask questions that show you are genuinely interested in the child's thoughts and intersperse them with more descriptive commenting than questions.

*Example Questions:*

*Teacher: "What do you see on this page?" (Toddler points to a truck)*

*Teacher: "Yes that is a big, blue truck."*

*Teacher: "What's happening here?" (Teacher points to a picture)*

*Teacher: "That is a yellow bus."*

*Teacher: "I wonder if there are two trucks?" (Prompting a pre-academic skill & child points to another truck)*

*Teacher: "You are right, there is a blue and a black truck."*

*Teacher: "I wonder if she is feeling sad now?" (Exploring the name of feelings)*

*Teacher: "What is going to happen next?" (Creating a feeling of excitement and discovery)*





**Respond with smiles, encouragement, praise and expressive delight to your toddler's efforts to respond.** Follow your child's lead and empower his or her discovery and exploration of the book. Use hand movements with your words. Slide your finger under the words or letters on the page and show left to right movement.

Read using "parentese" language which sounds like this:

- sing-song, higher pitched, slower voice
- clear articulation
- pauses after reading some words to wait for a response
- repeat words often

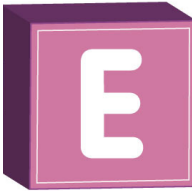
*Examples:*

*"Wow that is a tall giraffe."*

*"You are really thinking hard about that."*

*"Wow, you know a lot about trains."*

*"That's awesome. You are learning about the names of so many animals and what they eat."*



**Expand on what your toddler says.** You can expand by adding a new word or similar word to what he or she is saying or by reminding them of a personal experience or event in their life that is similar to the story in the book.

*Examples:*

*"Yes, I think he's feeling excited too, and he might be a little scared as well."*

*"Yes, it is horse; it's also called a mare."*

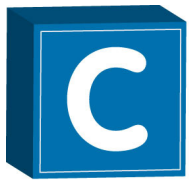
*"Yes, that boy is going to the park. Do you remember going to the park with grandma?"*

**Remember:**

- Read in a quiet place.
- Allow children to select the book. Read books that reflect children's experiences.
- Allow children to sit in a comfortable position while reading the book.
- Allow children to re-read the same books as often as they wish. This is a pre-reading skill and leads to memorization of the story.
- Read to children every day and allow them to see you reading.
- Offer a variety of books such as folk tales, poems, informational books, fantasy, fables and adventure stories.



# *Building Blocks for Reading With CARE with Preschoolers*



**Comment and describe objects, colors, numbers, sizes, letters, emotions, and actions of pictures in books.** Talk about the pictures in your native language while you point to the pictures, or run your finger under the lines of the words as you read them. Take turns interacting and let the child turn the pages and be the story teller by encouraging and listening to him/her talk about the pictures or retell memorized stories



**Ask open-ended questions and explore book together.** Ask questions that show you are interested in the child's thoughts and ideas. E.g. "What do you think will happen next?" "What's interesting about this page?" Avoid asking too many questions or your child will think you are testing him. To keep a balance you can intersperse open-ended questions with descriptive comments. E.g. "I see a red car and one, two, three, four trees. Oh, there's a little mouse. What do you see?" When you do ask questions, don't "test" your child about facts (e.g., "what color is this?" "what shape is this?"). Questions with right or wrong answers put the child on the spot and may cause anxiety or resistance.

Examples of open ended questions:

*"What do you see on this page?"* (observing and reporting)

*"What's happening here?"* (story telling)

*"What is that a picture of?"* (promoting academic skills)

*"I wonder how she is feeling now?"* (exploring feelings)

*"What is going to happen next?"* (predicting)





**Respond and listen attentively with smiles, encouragement, praise and delight for the child's thinking and responses.** Follow the child's lead and empower his or her confidence.

*"Good thinking, that is a tall giraffe."*

*"You really thinking hard about that."*

*"Wow, you know a lot about trains."*



**Expand on your what the child says.** You can expand by adding a new word or similar word to what the child says or by reminding her of a personal experience or event in her life that is similar to the story in the book.

*"Yes, I agree he is feeling excited, and he might be a little scared as well."*

*"Yes, it is horse; it's also called a mare because it's female."*

*"Yes, that boy is going to the park. Do you remember going to the park with grandma?"*

You can also expand by encouraging the child to write his own stories, or dictate stories to you and write them down.

*"That's awesome. You are learning your letters and are learning to read and are going to be ready for school."*

You can expand by encouraging the child to problem solve solutions to the story plot and act out their ideas with puppets.

### **Remember:**

- Read in a quiet place.
- Avoid commands and criticisms when children are reading.
- Allow children to reread stories as often as they wish. This is a pre-reading skill and leads to mastery and confidence.
- Read to children often.
- Offer a variety of books such as folk tales, poems, informational books, fantasy, fables and adventure stories. Let children choose what to read.
- Encourage parents in reading to their children in their native language.

## *Promoting Young Children’s School Readiness Teachers as “Pre-Academic Coaches”*

“Descriptive commenting” is a powerful way to strengthen preschool children’s academic readiness. The following is a list of academic concepts and behaviors that can be commented upon when playing with a child. Modulate the length and complexity of your language according to the child’s language development.



<i><b>Academic Concepts</b></i>	<i><b>Examples</b></i>
<p>_____ colors</p> <p>_____ number counting</p> <p>_____ shapes</p> <p>_____ letters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You have the red car and the yellow truck.”</li> <li>• “There are one, two, three dinosaurs in a row.”</li> <li>• “Now the square Lego is stuck to the round Lego.”</li> </ul>
<p>_____ sizes (long, short, tall, smaller than, bigger than, etc.)</p> <p>_____ positions (up, down, beside, next to, on top, behind, etc..)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “That train is longer than the track.”</li> <li>• “You are putting the tiny bolt in the right circle.”</li> <li>• “The blue block is next to the yellow square, and the purple triangle is on top of the long red rectangle.”</li> </ul>
<i><b>Persistence Skills (Preschoolers)</b></i>	
<p>_____ working hard</p> <p>_____ concentrating, focusing</p> <p>_____ persistence, patience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You are working so hard on that puzzle and thinking about where that piece will go.”</li> <li>• “You are so patient and just keep trying all different ways to make the piece fit together.”</li> </ul>
<p>_____ following teacher’s directions</p> <p>_____ problem solving</p> <p>_____ trying again</p> <p>_____ reading</p> <p>_____ thinking skills</p> <p>_____ listening</p> <p>_____ working hard/best work</p> <p>_____ independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You followed directions exactly like I asked you. You really listened.”</li> <li>• “You are thinking hard about how to solve the problem, and coming up with a great solution to make a ship.”</li> <li>• “You have figured that out all by yourself.”</li> </ul>



# BEHAVIOR PLAN RECORD SHEET

## Promoting Language Development

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<p>Child Behavior I want to see less of:</p> <p><i>Examples: Seth engages in solitary play, no response to peers, no peer social communication. (Does have language skills but doesn't use them to interact with others.)</i></p> <p><b>Target Child (nature of language problem):</b></p>	<p>Positive Opposite Language Behavior I want to see more of:</p> <p><i>Example: Seth plays sitting next to 1-2 children, notices what another peer is doing, initiates social communication to ask for help.</i></p> <p><b>Developmentally Appropriate Language Goal for Child:</b></p>	<p>Language Scripts:</p> <p><i>Example: When sitting next to Seth use intentional commenting to help him listen to a peer's request or notice what another child is doing. Model and prompt social communication he can imitate and use with peers. Praise social language.</i></p> <p><b>Language Building Strategies:</b></p>
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# Teacher-to-Parent Communication Letter

## *Encouraging Your Child's Patience*

All young children have short attention spans and are easily distractible. Once they get to a child care setting or preschool there are more demands on them to listen. You can help support your child's attentiveness and increase his or her persistence or patience with a difficult play activity by commenting, describing and coaching your child when you notice them doing any of the following behaviors:

**Keep Trying:** Describe and praise your child's behavior whenever you notice them concentrating, paying attention, or staying focused when trying to solve a problem (e.g. completing a difficult puzzle, trying to draw, write, read, or learn something new). For example, *"You're really looking at all those letters and staying patient."* Or, *"You keep trying different ways to put those blocks together. You are really thinking hard."*

**Being Patient:** Label your child's emotions whenever you notice them staying calm or patient. *"That is really frustrating to do and you keep trying again. You are really being patient and staying calm. I think you are going to be able to do that."*

Record on your *Parent-to-Teacher Communication Form* your experiences coaching your child persisting with a difficult task and staying calm and send this form back to school with your child.



*Incredible Children!*

**The  
Incredible  
Years**

# Parent-to-Teacher Communication Letter



## Encouraging Your Child's Patience

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Record on this form your experiences coaching your child persisting with a difficult task and staying calm and send this form back to your child care setting or preschool with your child.*

**Examples:** *“Frederick, you are staying calm and keep trying to work on that puzzle.”*  
Or, *“Suzie, good patience with brushing your teeth.”*

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Years**



**The Incredible Years®  
Teacher and Child Care Provider  
Self-Reflection Inventory**

**Promoting Language Development in Toddlers and Preschoolers**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers learn extensively from self-reflection regarding their classroom management and the teaching strategies they are using that are working or not working. From these reflections teachers determine personal goals for making changes in their approaches to bring about the most positive learning climate they can. Use this Inventory to think about your strengths and limitations and determine your goals.

**1 – Never 3 – Occasionally 5 - Consistently**

<b><i>Proactive Teacher</i></b>	
1. I use “teacher-ese” language which includes words spoken slowly, in a higher pitched, exaggerated playful voice with positive enthusiasm and lots of repetition.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
2. I combine non verbal hand gestures with my verbal communication.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
3. I pace my language slowly, give children a chance to respond non verbally and/or verbally and listen before speaking again.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
4. I personalize my communication with individual children (e.g., favorite books or activities or food, birthdays, family members and pets etc.)	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
5. I avoid too much question-asking and corrections when possible.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
6. I use descriptive commenting during my play interactions with children (e.g., describing objects, positions, colors).	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
7. I use visual supports for children with language delays to prompt their nonverbal responses.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
8. I use nonverbal signals and gestures along with my descriptive commenting.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
9. I imitate children’s syllables, words, sounds, and gestures with positive affect.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
10. I modulate my language complexity according to each child’s receptive and expressive language development.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
11. For children with language, I use the “one up rule” of adding one word longer than the child’s spontaneous word production.	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>

12. I help children pay attention to the speech of others and to make sense of their information by repeating what another child says. (E.g., intentional communication)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
13. I help children understand the meaning of language by combining language with social interaction experiences.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
14. I immediately praise children's use of nonverbal and verbal responses (e.g., good pointing, nice talking).	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
15. I help parents know how they can use descriptive commenting, imitation and child-directed approaches to enhance language development.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
16. I use interactive reading approaches with children allowing them to act out parts and share experiences.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
17. I create opportunities for children to communicate with others by setting up practices and using intentional communication.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
18. I am "child-directed" in my communication interactions and avoid corrections and too many instructions.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
19. I pace my descriptive commenting and choices I give children so they have time to respond.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
20. I frequently sing to children in my classroom or home during play times or transitions to another activity or during circle time.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
21. I pair songs with physical actions.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
22. I use picture snack menus or talks to encourage communication at snack time.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
23. For preschoolers I engage in pre-academic coaching (describing numbers, letters, shapes, textures) and increase the variety of words I use by providing more detailed descriptions of objects, people or animals.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
24. For preschoolers I encourage children to practice telling each other what they want and to share their ideas or plans.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>