

# Language Development

Adapted from S.T.E.P. Trainer's Manual  
UT Health Science Center at Houston, 2002

# Learner Objectives

- Participants will
  - Define language development
  - Recognize children need language experiences in the classroom
  - Be able to see what GOLD looks like in your classroom in the language objectives (Objectives 8-10)
  - Design a language rich classroom
  - Explore GOLD activities for Language and Literacy

# What is language development

- Children learn language as they interact with responsive adults and peers and experience language used in meaningful contexts.
- Speaking and listening to communicate meaning.



# Language in GOLD

- Objective 8-
- Listens to and understands increasing complex language
  - 8a-Comprehends language
    - Can the child understand when you talk to them, not about what the child can say back to you
  - 8b-follows directions
    - How many directions at a time? Not an assessment about how well a child listens to a teacher

# Language in GOLD

- Objective 9
- Uses language to express thoughts and needs
  - 9a-uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
  - Speaks clearly
    - Does the child have good articulation? Looking for SLI, stutters, lisps
  - Uses conventional grammar
    - Children use over generalizations-looking to see that they are improving
  - Tells about another time or place-This happens organically in conversations, not a quiz

# Language and GOLD

- Objective 10
- Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills
  - 10a-engages in conversations- With anyone.....parent, peer, teacher
  - 10b-Uses social rules of language-This is cultural and community specific-No one better to assess this than the children parents and teachers in the community
    - Appreciating humor, using sarcasm

# Language –Literacy Connection

- Vocabulary

- Listening comprehension
- Word recognition
- Reading comprehension

- Grammar

- Listening comprehension
- Comprehending complex written language

- Pragmatics

- Listening and reading comprehension
- Written composition
- Understanding teacher talk

# Meaningful Differences

Hart and Risely, 1995

Measure	Professional		Working Class		Welfare	
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child
Vocab Size	2,176	1,116	1,498	749	974	525
Utterance per hour	487	310	301	223	176	168
Different words per hour	382	297	251	216	167	149

# Optimal Language Development Occurs When...

...children have opportunities to  
use language frequently.

*“Children who are constantly exposed to an environment rich in oral language and who interact frequently with adults in a supportive social and emotional setting develop more facility with oral language than children lacking these opportunities.”*

*Morrow, Strickland and Woo, 1998*

# Features of a Language-Rich Classroom

## **Teachers in language-rich classrooms:**

- Read aloud daily
- Engage children in extended, cognitively challenging conversations
- Ask open-ended questions
- Encourage children to retell stories
- Encourage children to describe events in their lives
- Discuss a wide range of topics
- Model use of new and unusual words
- Discuss word meanings

# Features of a Language-Rich Classroom (contd.)

**In language-rich classrooms, teachers:**

- ❑ Challenge children to justify their thinking
- ❑ Encourage children to express ideas using complex sentences and vocabulary
- ❑ Encourage language play
- ❑ Encourage pretend play and pretend talk
- ❑ Interact with children one-one-one and in small group activities

# Room arrangement for optimal language interaction

- Small, partitioned spaces promote:
  - Higher quality verbal interactions
  - Increased cooperative play
  - Greater use of language-related activities
- Large, open spaces result in:
  - Poor language interaction
  - Less use of language-related activities



# Scaffolding children's language development

Scaffolding...

- Guides and supports the child's language learning by building on what the child is already able to do.
- Moves child from a lower to a higher level of language use.
- Builds language and literacy skills in young children.
- Builds English as a second language skill.

# Scaffolding children's language development (contd.)

To **SCAFFOLD** children's language, teachers...

- Model the use of extended language and rich vocabulary
- Use questions and prompts to extend children's language
- Give children adequate response time
- Expand children's ideas, using new vocabulary and syntax
- Request clarification
- Promote questions and conversations among children
- Provide feedback to encourage, interpret, and evaluate children's responses

# Any questions

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