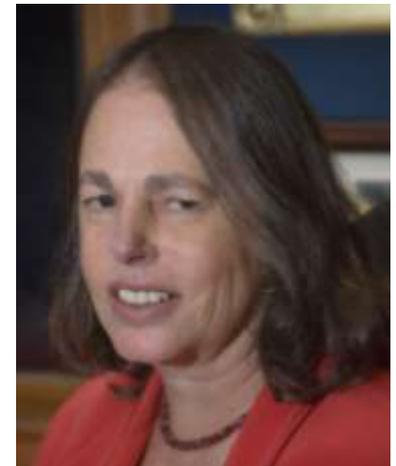
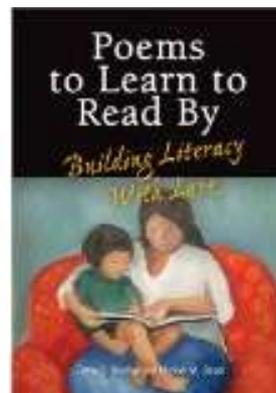
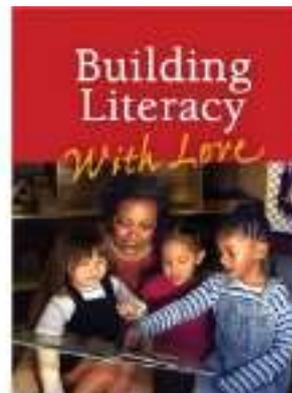
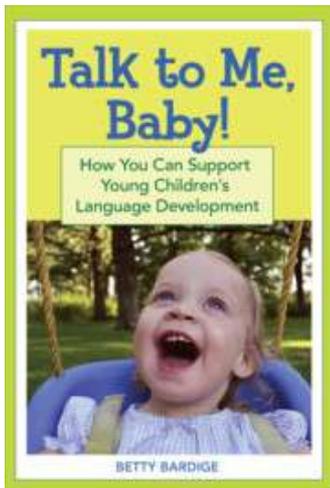


# Priming Children for Language and Literacy Success:

A Focus on the Toddler Years

Betty Bardige, Ed.D.

[www.awealthofwords.com](http://www.awealthofwords.com)



# Meet Maisha: An Emergent Reader



# Steps to Literacy



5. Independent Reading

4. Phonics and Decoding Skills

3. Phonemic Awareness & Concepts of Print

2. Oral Language, Vocabulary, and Storytelling

1. Seeing, Hearing, Connecting, and Communicating

**Language** develops in caring relationships through back-and-forth conversations that build on children's natural curiosity and desire to connect.



What we give children when they are little builds foundations for thinking, making friends, and continuing to learn.  
It can affect their entire lives.

# Language is Key



**To literacy:** storytelling, vocabulary, how sounds combine to make words



**To learning:** questions, step-by-step problem solving, concepts, reasoning, memory



**To social/emotional development:** making friends, negotiating, expressing feelings, self-control, resilience

Almost all children learn language, following similar patterns and timetables, **but they don't learn equally well.** The more parents and teachers other caregivers talk with babies and young children in engaging ways, the faster and more fully children's language develops.

# Language Milestones

- In utero
- 0-6 months
- 4-12 months
- 6-15 months
- 10-18 months
- 15 -24 months
- 18-30 months
- Tuning in to language
- Back & forth, “serve & return” interaction – **attunement** with parents & caregivers
- Babbling
- Joint attention, imitation, & communicative babbles & gestures
- Symbolic gestures; “expressive jargon,” & first words
- Putting words together
- Verbal (or sign) language becomes the child’s dominant mode of communication

# Two-Way Conversation

With babies, "conversation" can be in gestures, smiles, coos, and babbles - not necessarily in words. We tend to use "baby talk" or "Parentese" to engage and hold the child's attention.



But words still matter. Babies who hear more words develop richer language.

# Priming the Language Pump:

## How Adults Help Children Make the Shift from Babbling and Gesturing to Using Words

- Labeling objects and actions; narrating the world
- Responding to anything that sounds like a word
- Pairing words with gestures, objects that a child is looking at or handling, or “Baby Signs”
- Using special baby talk (in some cultures) that is easier for children to say
- Creating “communication temptations” (situations in which a toddler is likely to ask for something)
- Continuing to converse – in Parentese, baby talk, and adult language!



**Bathe children in love and language!**

Toddlers are eager to learn new words - and need lots of chances to use them!



# Off Like a Rocket



Sometime between 18 months and two and a half, young children's language "takes off." Having amassed a vocabulary of about 50 words or stock phrases, the child begins to combine words in novel ways to create sentences that follow a rudimentary grammar. **Suddenly, the child who took six months to learn those 50 words is learning 9 new ones every day!** To parents, it feels like a miracle! Their child is bursting with language – and soon using it as his dominant means of communication.

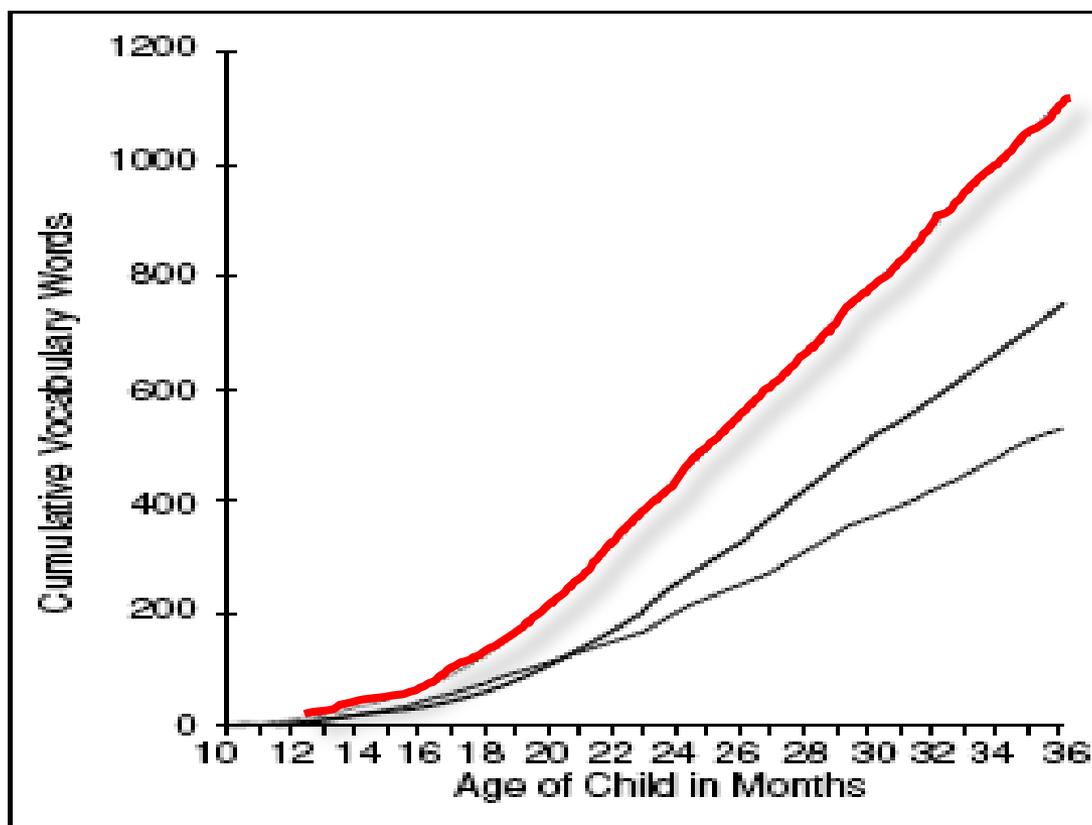
**Children's early experiences with language  
build a reservoir of fuel**



**that powers a language lift-off!**

# Language “Takes Off”

Source: Hart, B., and Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company



**50M words**

**800K encouragements**

heard by age 4

**30M words**

**200K encouragements**

heard by age 4

**15M words**

**100K encouragements**

heard by age 4

All adults use a certain amount of what Todd Risley called “**business talk**” to manage children:

It’s time to go.

Wash your hands.

Don’t touch that.

When we need children to pay attention, we give them explicit directions – without the distraction of literacy-rich language.

**Play talk**, in contrast, is informative relationship-building talk meant to engage the listener. It includes:

conversation & chit-chat

running commentary & story-telling

open-ended questioning

explanation & thinking aloud

humor & wordplay

# The Power of Play Talk

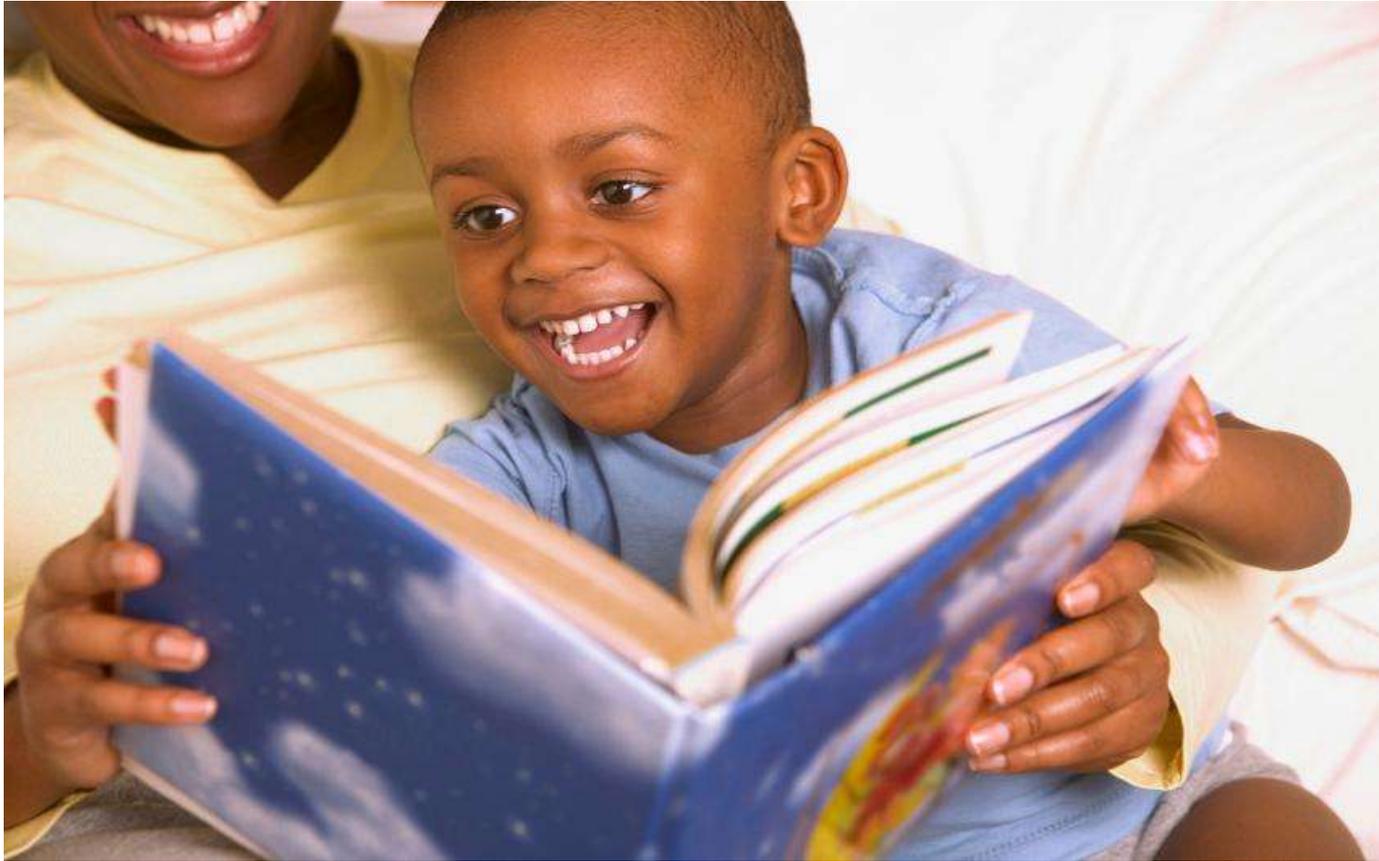
We found that the large differences in the amount of parent talk that infants and toddlers received, **particularly the amount of non-business conversation and commentary**, was powerfully related to large differences in ... toddlers' vocabulary growth and to ... measures of their intellectual achievement at age 3 ... and later at age 9 ... **Parental talkativeness to babies accounted for all the correlation that existed between socio-economic status (SES)—and/or race—and the verbal intellectual accomplishments of these American children.**

--Todd Risley & Betty Hart, 2006



It's not about race, or social class,  
how much education parents have,  
or what language(s) they speak.  
It's about what parents, teachers,  
and caregivers DO – how and how  
much they talk with children. **We  
can ALL make a difference!**

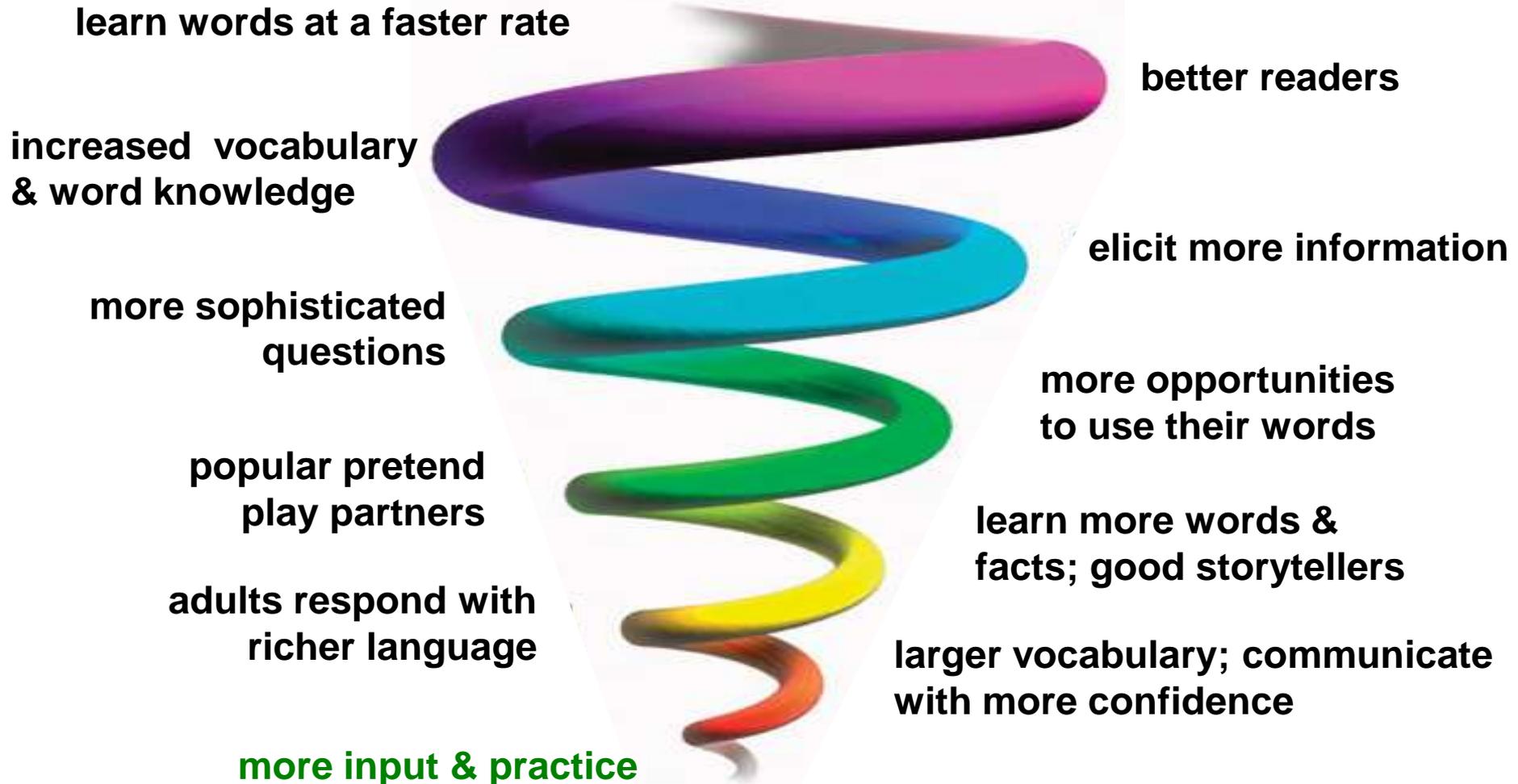
“Play Talk” makes the difference  
for language development . . .



# ...because Play Talk is rich talk!

- Responsive – Follows the child's lead
- Imaginative and often silly
- Open-ended and encouraging
- Asks and explores questions
- Includes talk about past, future, what if...
- Models thinking and reasoning
- Richer vocabulary
- Longer conversations with more information
- More elaborate sentences and descriptions
- Word play, songs, & rhymes

# Play Talk Creates an Upward Spiral



# Toddlers Hearing Two Languages (simultaneous bilinguals):

- Go through the same developmental steps in both languages
- Learn the sound and grammatical patterns of each language
- May shift languages in different settings or mix languages in the same sentence or story
- Develop total vocabularies that are just as large as those of children learning only one language

Children with communication delays or disabilities show the same patterns in both languages, and the same patterns as monolingual speakers.

- Fred Genesee, McGill University

# Strengths of Dual Language Learners

- **Executive function and cognitive flexibility:** Children do better at tasks that involve shifting attention, for example, sorting by shape instead of color.
- **Connection to family and heritage**
- **Ability to speak and become literate in both languages** – as long as learning continues in both

Learning more than one language - whether simultaneously or sequentially - has been shown in several studies to boost verbal and nonverbal IQ.



# Which Language(s) Should I Use?



Parents and teachers should speak with toddlers in the language(s) in which they are most comfortable - sharing rich vocabulary and passing on traditional songs, stories, and sayings.

# How Do We Give ALL of Our Toddlers a Strong Language Foundation?

- Structural aspects: How can we maximize opportunities for one-to-one teacher-child communication?
- Research-based techniques that teachers can use throughout the day
- Interesting things to talk about: What can be added to the environment to prompt enriched communication?
- Helping children learn from each other
- Tools: When to Seek Help; Language-Building Habits; References, articles, & websites; **Language-Building Tips**

# Maximizing Opportunities for One-to-One Teacher-Child Communication

- Small groups, primary care-giving assignments, and continuity of care
- Adults who understand what children may be trying to say
- Home-school connections and home language support
- Effective systems for assessing children and addressing language delays, at home and in school, throughout the day
- **Removing barriers to communication**

# Remove Barriers to Communication



- **Too many children competing for adult attention**
- **Too much stimulation**
- **Height, distance, lack of face-to-face orientation or joint attention**
- **Lining up single file**
- **Background music**
- **Wide open spaces**
- **Too many interruptions and transitions**

# Research-Based Techniques to Use Throughout the Day

- Responsive communication
- Supported storytelling and re-telling
- Questions whose answers you really want to know
- Positive Guidance



[www.learntotalkaroundtheclock.com](http://www.learntotalkaroundtheclock.com)

[www.hanen.org/Hanen-Resources/Resources-for-ECE-Consultants.aspx](http://www.hanen.org/Hanen-Resources/Resources-for-ECE-Consultants.aspx)

# Responsive Communication

- Get on the child's wavelength – then S-T-R-E-T-C-H
- Match emotional tenor



# Respond to **WHAT** the Child Means to Say, Not to **HOW** He Says It

- Don't correct grammar, pronunciation, or choice of language, dialect, or communication modality.
- If you don't understand what a child said, ask him to repeat it or show you.
- Respond with correct forms. Add a bit more to spark the child's response.



# Follow the CAR

- **F**ollow the child's lead.
- **C**omment - and wait for a response.
- **A**sk a question - and wait for a response.
- **R**espond by adding more - and wait for a response.



WASHINGTON LEARNING SYSTEMS:

[www.wlearning.com/products/language-is-the-key/car-strategies/](http://www.wlearning.com/products/language-is-the-key/car-strategies/)

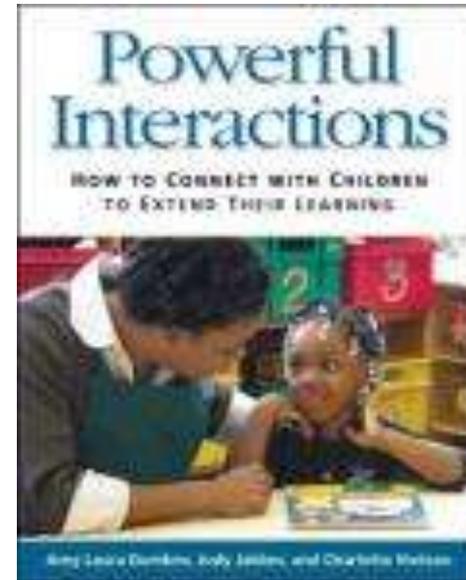
# Powerful Interactions:

How to Connect with Children and Extend Their Learning

**1. Be Present**

**2. Connect**

**3. Extend Learning**



by Amy Laura Dombro, Judy Jablon, and, Charlotte Stetson

POWERFUL INTERACTIONS:

[www.powerfulinteractions.com/](http://www.powerfulinteractions.com/)

# Toddlers Need Time to Put Their Thoughts into Words

- Be patient. You may need to wait 5 seconds or more for a toddler to respond to your question.
- Take breaks and breathers.
- Let the child choose or change the subject.
- Acknowledge the child's contribution, then extend his ideas in a way that invites a response.
- Avoid questions or teaching that shuts down conversation.



# Two Conversations

Andrew : Here comes the big truck. Watch out everybody, big truck coming.

Father: Sorry big truck, you have to slow down. You are coming to the tollgate. Here's your ticket, Mr. Truck Driver.

Andrew: Thank you, Mr. Man. Zoom...zoom, going up the mountain. Oops, flat tire.

Father: Humm...that flat tire looks pretty serious. We'd better find the jack and jack up your truck.

Andrew: Here's the jack. Fix the tire.

Father: Let's hurry. Looks as if you've got ice cream in your truck. We don't want it to melt.

Andrew: Yeah—got lots of ice cream and chocolate ice cream, strawberry, and more ice cream.

Father: You're making me hungry. How about giving me an ice cream sandwich while we repair this flat tire.

(Segal & Adcock, 1985, p. 127)

Child: Here comes the big truck. Watch out everybody, big truck coming.

Adult: Where is the big truck going?

Child: Up the mountain.

Adult: What's up on the mountain?

Child: Trees.

Adult: What's the truck going to do?

Child: Zoom...zoom.

Adult: Where's the truck going now?

Child: Zoom...zoom.

*Talk to Me, Baby!*, p. 89-90

# Questions Can Stimulate Conversation

**Quizzing Questions** – Questions you know the answer to

- These questions have one right answer. They can be used for assessment, review, or confidence-building, but they often cut short communication..

- Ex. “What letter is on this block?”



**Open-Ended Questions** -- Questions that ask for opinions, choices, explanations, ideas, and personal stories

- These questions have many answers that offer opportunities for elaboration and discussion based on the child’s response.

- Ex. “What are you building?”



**Reflective Questions** -- Questions that provoke thinking

- These questions often elicit long explanations that demonstrate a child’s intent and thought process and should prompt teacher reflection and action. They can also lead to reframing and deeper understanding.

- Ex. “I have been watching you build and I’m curious. How do you think you could get the blue cylinders to balance?”



# Supporting Storytelling and Re-telling

## Kirsty's First Story

*One winter day, when Kirsty was 22 months old, a fox trotted past her living room window. Kirsty's mother pointed excitedly as it ran out of sight, then showed Kirsty the tracks in the snow.*

“See fox” said Kirsty the next morning.

“Yes,” replied her mother, “we saw a fox.”

“Feet,” said Kirsty.

Her mother elaborated. “Its feet made tracks in the snow,” and Kirsty repeated “snow.”

Over the next few days, Kirsty told the story at least **100 times**, helped by her mother and father, and then by her clued-in caregiver. Kirsty's few contributions – “See fox,” “feet,” and “snow” were soon supplemented with “run,” “fast,” “tracks,” “tail,” and “red” as the story grew more elaborate.



**Elaborated reminiscing:** Telling simple stories with a child about her past experiences, including interesting details and descriptions, and encouraging her to remember and to help tell the story.

“Let’s tell Mommy what we did today. You played in the sand!”

“Pail.”

“Yes. You filled your pail with sand! And then we dumped it out!”



**It’s a great way to build language! Children who have heard more elaborated reminiscing as toddlers will tell more sophisticated stories and remember more details of events as preschoolers.**

Susan Engel, “The Emergence of Storytelling During the First Three Years”

[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter\\_key\\_language\\_storytelling&AddInterest](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_key_language_storytelling&AddInterest)

# Give Toddlers Words



Toddlers often talk to themselves out loud as they remind themselves how to behave, make simple plans, or talk their way through problems. This self-talk gradually becomes inner speech.

**Inner speech:** Talking silently to oneself or thinking in words.

# Positive Guidance Builds Self-Control - and Language

- Give 1 or 2 step instructions.
- Sympathize with frustration as you enforce limits.
- Offer choices.
- Explain reasons.
- Use humor or fantasy to prevent and defuse power struggles.
- Prepare children for changes.
- Turn chores into games and races.
- Talk about feelings & engage empathy.
- Give toddlers words for strong feelings and acceptable ways to express them.
- Practice polite words and “good” behavior in pretend play.
- Use *first-then language*: “First, put the toys in the bin. Then we can read.”



**Provide opportunities to practice collaboration!**

# Interesting Things to Talk About: Sparking Conversations

- Offer provocations
- Use books as springboards for conversation
- Explore children's interests
- Share "Juicy Words"
- Use math words and problem-solving language
- Don't forget the humor
- Get involved in pretend play
- Make print and wall displays meaningful

# Provocations: Interesting Objects and Phenomena to Investigate



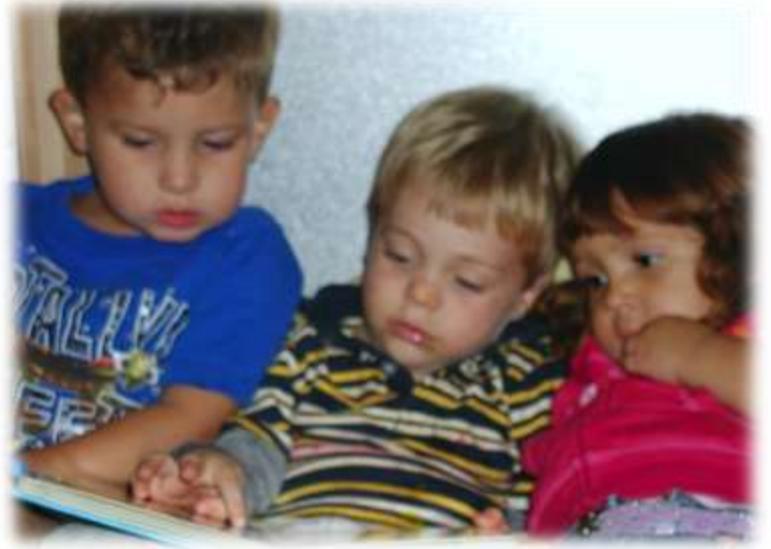
- Spark children's observations and questions.
- Wonder aloud.
- Encourage children to ask "what will happen if ...."
- Use specific words and sensory descriptions.

# Books as Springboards for Conversations

The books toddlers like best:

- Have pictures that are easy to name and talk about.
- Give them lots of things to do, say, act out, or imitate.
- Contain interesting words and mellifluous phrases.
- May show lots of members of a category.
- Tell simple stories or have patterns that are easy to follow.
- Often tell reassuring stories about characters who get lost & are found, run away & come back, or make mistakes & are forgiven.
- Enable toddlers to pursue special interests and become “experts.”

- adapted from *Talk to Me, Baby!*

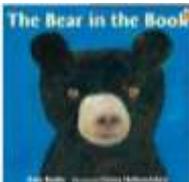


# Conversations Connect Books to Real Life



“It is the talk that surrounds storybook reading that gives it power.”

-- NAEYC and International Reading Association Position Statement



*The Bear in the Book*, by Kate Banks and Georg Hallensleben

# Explore Children's Interests in Depth

## Hammy the Hamster

handle

gentle

curious

active

nocturnal



rodent

omnivorous

burrow

store food

hibernate

desert

cheek pouches

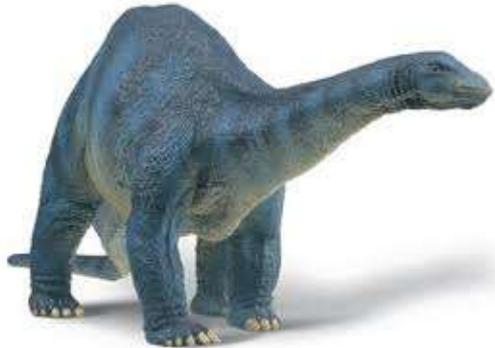
# "Juicy Words" I Learned from Two-Year Olds



excavator



tender



apatosaurus



coreopsis



nurse sharks

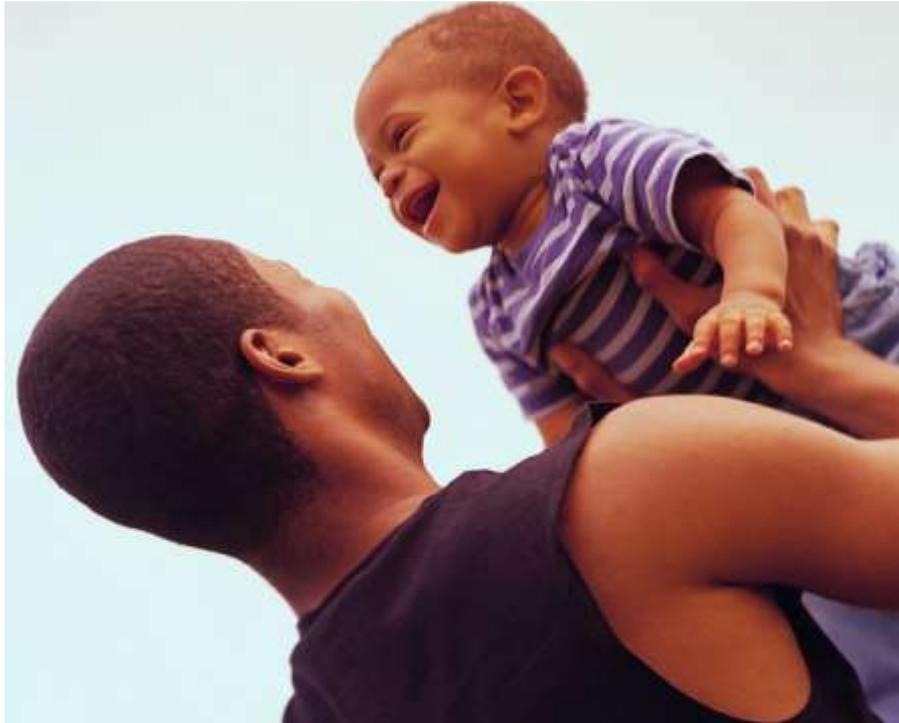
**Little children love BIG words -  
and the impressed reaction they get!**

# Toddlers Enjoy Math Language

- **Number:** 1, 5,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , a lot, count
- **Size:** tiny, long, humongous
- **Shape:** rectangle, oblong, ring
- **Space/Direction:** up, under, around, left, top, Where?
- **Order/Comparison:** tallest, second, last, more, darker
- **Measurement:** inches, teaspoon
- **Pattern:** even, alike, red/blue/red/blue
- **Problem-solving:** balance, fits into, How many more?
- **Time, sequence:** yesterday, before, after lunch, then



# Don't Forget the Humor!



Toddlers love silliness. They are developing a sense of the ridiculous, and will repeat any antics that get a laugh.

“Babies and small children love to hear the sound of laughter.”  
- *Wakanyeja WoAwanka (Caring for Our Sacred Children)*

# Use Silly Songs and Movement Games

- to accompany and enhance routines
- to encourage wordplay and creativity
- to teach concepts such as opposites
- to extend vocabulary

**Make up new words to favorite songs!**



# Get Involved in Pretend Play

- Set the stage.
- Wait, watch, and wonder ... then find a way to enter.
- Talk to and for dolls, toys, and imaginary friends
- Take on a role
- Expand children's ideas
- Help children participate



**Use Fun, Fanciful Language**

# Make Print Meaningful



Annie cooks her favorite pasta -- 'Annie's Macaroni'

## Labels

- Kitchen
- Refrigerator
- Store
- Cash register
- Our Bear Unit

## Meaningful Print

- Annie's Macaroni
- Medicine Refrigerator
- Ana's Bodega
- Apples - 5¢ each
- Hibernation Cave
- Bears like honey but it gives them cavities.

# Help Children Learn from Each Other

- Choose toys, activities, and settings that encourage collaboration
- Foster friendships
- Help toddlers use their words – and understand each others' languages and communication strategies
- Give children roles – and reasons to communicate
- Highlight each child's strengths
- Help children connect – then step back
- Teach play scripts and Social Stories™

# Children Can Be Great Language Teachers!



# Encourage Collaboration



# Toddler Play: Making Friends

- Toddler friends like to play near and imitate each other.
- Most toddlers aren't good at sharing, so provide duplicates of attractive toys.



Talk about what friends did together!

# Toddler Play: Making Friends



Provide private (supervised) spaces for 2-year old conversations and encourage budding friendships.

# Help Toddlers Use Their Words



# Highlight Each Child's Strengths

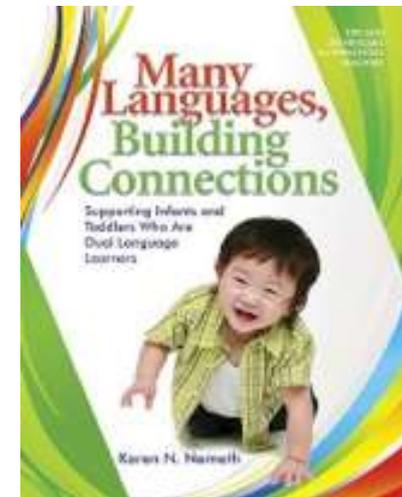
- ✧ What is the child especially good at?
  - ✧ Who does the child like to play with or near?
  - ✧ What does the child investigate?
  - ✧ What does the child try over and over again?
  - ✧ What questions does the child ask – with or without words?
- 
- What can you add to the environment to build on the child's interests or showcase her strengths?
  - How can you help a child share his interests and strengths with others?

# Support Home Language

- Learn some words in the child's home language – especially words of endearment & praise and names of child's favorite objects and activities.
- Include books, songs, and signs in all children's languages.
- Help children learn each other's languages – and learn from each other
- Use Sign Language or gestures as a bridge.
- Respond when children use their home languages, and help them show what they mean if you or other children don't fully understand.
- Encourage and support participation in collaborative play.

*Many Languages, Building Connections: Supporting Infants and Toddlers Who Are Dual Language Learners.*  
Karen Nemeth, 2012, Gryphon House.

<http://languagecastle.com/>



# Create Routines that Give Children Roles – and Reasons to Communicate

- **Snack time:** Create a ‘Snack Guy’ helper who passes out snack, takes orders/requests and responds
- **Show and Tell:** A child brings a favorite book, toy, or artifact from home to show the class or a small group – or shares something she made

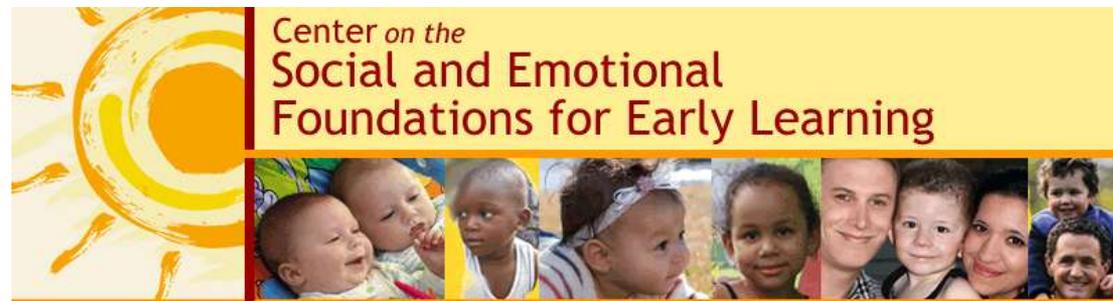
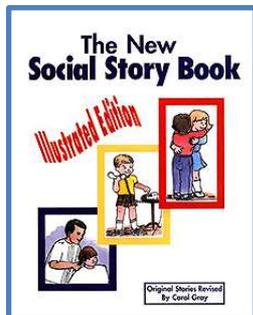


# Help Children Connect – Then Step Back

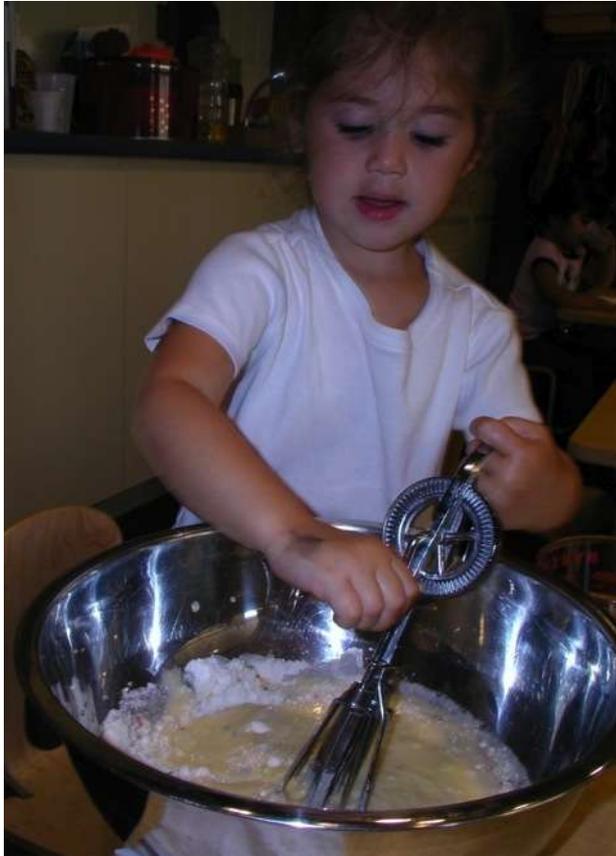
- Help children find commonalities
  - “Who likes chocolate ice cream?”
  - “You both like play dough. What color would you like to use today? What will you make?”
- Teach conversation starters that prompt mutual interest
  - “You like dinosaurs, right?”
  - “What did you get for your birthday?”
- Mix play themes (e.g. – dinosaurs in the house corner)
- Draw attention to objects
  - “Look at those cars. Let’s go play cars with Johnny.”
- Let peer play dictate the interaction
  - Children enjoy playing the same play themes and games with slight variations

# Use Stories to Script Interactions for Children

- **Social Stories™**, developed by Carol Gray, are mini books/stories that describe common situations or activities and script what the child/children should do. For more info: [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)
- **Scripted Stories** follow a similar formula that makes them effective: **describe the situation**, **talk about consequences and feelings and engage empathy**, end with a positive action rule and associated good feelings.  
See: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#scriptedstories>
- Create or adapt stories that script play scenarios, review rules, or describe situations in which a child may be frustrated, reluctant to engage, or aggressive.
- Read or act out stories with individual children or small groups before activities that may be socially challenging.



# Follow This Basic Recipe for a Language Rich Environment



## Ingredients:

- ☐ Warm relationships
- ☐ Interesting things to talk about
- ☐ Interested people to talk with

# Language-Building Habits

Pretend together

*Use fun, fanciful  
language*

Share hobbies,  
traditions, &  
family stories

Wonder aloud

Investigate their  
questions



Explore categories:  
body parts, colors,  
vehicles, animals

Let them help  
with chores

Offer  
explanations

Talk about  
feelings

Share books

Imagine!

**What great ways have you found to  
teach toddlers new words?**

Be silly

Sing!

Use specific, interesting words -- in ALL their languages!

# Questions???????

**Betty Bardige**

[drbardige@gmail.com](mailto:drbardige@gmail.com)

[www.awealthofwords.com](http://www.awealthofwords.com)

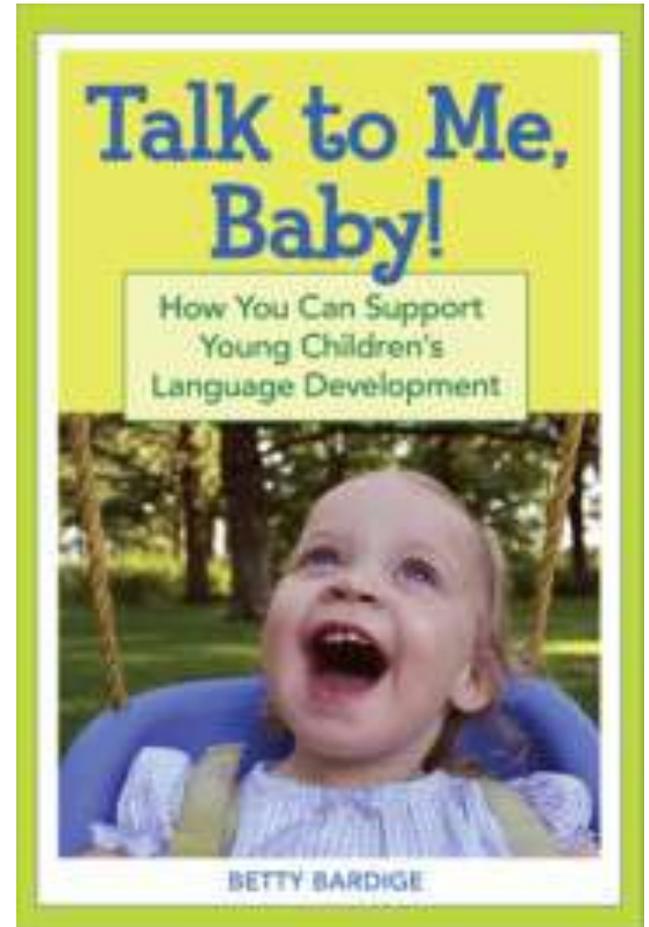
**Facebook: Language-Building Tips**

**Twitter: @bettybardige**

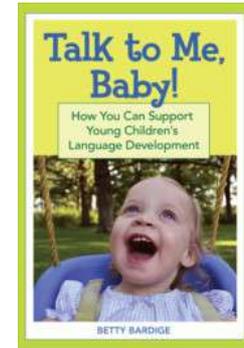
**Kori Bardige**

**Early Childhood Special Educator**

[emailkori@gmail.com](mailto:emailkori@gmail.com)



# Tools for Teachers



Language-Building Habits: A self-checklist for teachers

Lessons from Research Handout

Language-Building Tips: (Weekly tips for teachers of 2-6 year olds)

- Facebook: Language-Building Tips  
[http://www.facebook.com/LanguageBuildingTips?sk=page\\_insights](http://www.facebook.com/LanguageBuildingTips?sk=page_insights)
- Twitter: @bettybardige

ZERO TO THREE Journal Articles:

- Talk to Me, Baby!: Supporting Language Development in the First 3 Years  
[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/29-1\\_Bardige.pdf?docID=6641](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/29-1_Bardige.pdf?docID=6641)
  - Contains **When to Seek Help** sidebar
- Conversations in Child Care:  
<http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/conversations.pdf>
  - Tips for encouraging teacher-child and child-child conversations

# Resources for Parents

A Child Becomes a Reader: Proven Ideas from Research for Parents

[www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/documents/reading\\_pre.pdf](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/documents/reading_pre.pdf)

Ele Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment: <http://ele.fredrogerscenter.org>

Reach Out and Read: [www.reachoutandread.org/parent-resources/](http://www.reachoutandread.org/parent-resources/)

ZERO TO THREE free parent resources

- What We Know About Early Literacy and Language Development  
<http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/earlyliteracy2pagehandout.pdf?docID=2681&AddInterest=1145&JServSessionIda004=zmtot366z1.app233d>
- Everyday Ways to Support Your Baby or Toddler's Early Learning (available in English and Spanish)  
[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/early\\_learning\\_handout.pdf?docID=3081&AddInterest=1153&JServSessionIda004=zmtot366z1.app233d](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/early_learning_handout.pdf?docID=3081&AddInterest=1153&JServSessionIda004=zmtot366z1.app233d)

# Professional Development Resources

- *Talk to Me, Baby!* (contains Study Guide):  
<http://products.brookespublishing.com/Talk-to-Me-Baby-P102.aspx>
- Ele Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment:  
<http://ele.fredrogerscenter.org>
- Hanen Center: [www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)
- Language Castle: [www.languagecastle.com](http://www.languagecastle.com)
- Learn to Talk Around the Clock:  
[www.learntotalkaroundtheclock.com](http://www.learntotalkaroundtheclock.com)
- Powerful Interactions: [www.powerfulinteractions.com/](http://www.powerfulinteractions.com/)
- WASHINGTON LEARNING SYSTEMS:  
[www.wlearning.com/products/language-is-the-key/care-strategies/](http://www.wlearning.com/products/language-is-the-key/care-strategies/)
- ZERO TO THREE Cradling Literacy:  
[https://secure2.convio.net/zttcfm/site/Ecommerce/2077140175?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=3122&store\\_id=1461](https://secure2.convio.net/zttcfm/site/Ecommerce/2077140175?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=3122&store_id=1461)