

Module 6: Promoting Communication in the Home

Section: Techniques and Strategies



Activity 6.2: Providing Families and Caregivers with Ideas to Support Language and Communication in the Home

Educate families about the following techniques and strategies related to the four tips described in Module 6:

1. **Be an excellent observer.** While a behavior may not seem significant, it may provide insight into what a child is seeing, hearing, understanding, and communicating. Educate families to look carefully at the child's behaviors to gain insights into his or her language and communication abilities.
2. **Gain the child's attention for communication.** Incorporate positive strategies to obtain a child's attention before proceeding with communication (e.g., tap the child on the arm or shoulder, wave, get down to the eye level of the child to initiate attention). Do not include approaches such as grabbing a child's face for attention.
3. **Repeat, expand, and respond:**
 - Discuss the importance of following the lead of the child and following the child's goals (related to language and modality) when incorporating strategies related to "repeat, expand, and respond."
 - Provide "wait time." Children need time to process and connect to the activity and its associated language.
 - When repeating, expanding, and responding, use facial expressions to match what is being communicated (e.g., eyebrows down for a question, eyebrows up for a statement).

- Discuss the concept of “serve and return” (e.g., building brain structure by practicing the give and take of language). Model turn taking (e.g., during games, during meal time). For more information on “serve and return”: [Serve and Return Interaction Shapes Brain Circuitry](#), Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University.
 - Use book sharing to practice strategies that include “repeat, expand, and respond.” See information about the [Shared Reading Project](#) to guide families in learning how to read to their child.
4. **Use visual cues and natural gestures.** Emphasize to families the importance of incorporating visual cues (e.g., pointing, visually directing a child to an object or activity) as well as using gestures in clarifying communication for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Demonstrate how facial expressions play a big part in communication and convey meaning. Include activities to practice adding facial expressions (e.g., play a facial expression Bingo game, use mirrors to practice different facial expressions).

Additional strategies:

- Have the family view the Clerc Center webcast, [Maximizing Language Acquisition: ASL and Spoken English](#). Review evidence (as determined for each family) to guide understanding of critical components in early language acquisition: [Reference List: Maximizing Language Acquisition in ASL and spoken English](#).
- Identify possible community resources for families to observe examples of responsive language modeling (e.g., deaf and hard of hearing role models from the community). See the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management website for [Deaf Mentor Program examples](#).
- Provide encouragement to families of children with learning challenges that impact development of language milestones. Demonstrate how to support interactive back and forth communication with a child that may not always be responsive.

Developed with [Stacy Abrams](#)