

# Surrey Early Speech and Language Program Newsletter

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## Getting Ready for Kindergarten!

By: Amanda Goodison & Alex Schiffmacher

At this time of year, you may be wondering By, "What skills will help my child have a happy and successful transition into Kindergarten?"

Below is a list of some of the skills your child will need on entering Kindergarten. Five areas we feel are especially important to develop before kindergarten entry are safety, language, phonological awareness, basic concepts, and social and attention skills.

### Safety

A child entering Kindergarten in the fall will be expected to:

- wait for a parent or adult before crossing the street or entering a parking lot.
- tell his or her first and last name, address and phone number.

You may need to talk to your child about safety and the importance of holding an adult's hand around cars and in busy places.

### Expressive and Receptive Language

You can help your child get ready for kindergarten by building their knowledge of the following language skills. By kindergarten entry, your child should be able to:

- recognize & name basic colours (e.g. red, orange, yellow, green, & blue).
- understand & express emotions such as happy, sad, & mad.
- count from 1-10.
- follow simple directions (for example, "Go to the closet and get your coat and boots").
- name an object that is described (for example, "What is something we play with that is round?")

Find fun ways to "work on" these goals at home with your child. For example, you can pick a colour of the day if your goal is to work on colour names, and choose clothing, activities, and food items based on this colour.

### Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is a fancy term for the understanding that oral language can be divided into smaller parts. Sentences are made up of words, words are made up of syllables and syllables are made up of sounds, or "phonemes". Being **aware** of these **phonemes** allows us to manipulate them in different ways such as combining them to form words. Recent research has shown a strong link between early phonological awareness skills and learning to read.

The developmental sequence of phonological awareness is:



- awareness of rhymes
- segmenting sentences into words
- producing rhymes
- segmenting words into syllables
- identifying words that start with the same sound
- segmenting syllables/words into individual sounds
- manipulating sounds in a syllable/word (e.g. Say "mat", now change the /m/ to a /b/).

To boost children's phonological awareness skills at the preschool and kindergarten levels, we can start by working on their awareness of rhyme, which is the first skill to emerge. The best way to increase children's awareness of rhyme is through songs, books that rhyme, and playing with words and sounds. You can play with family members' names and your child's name to help them learn to create rhymes (e.g. "Mummy, tummy, lummy..."). Remember, the words you make up when rhyming do not have to be real words; nonsense words are great for increasing awareness of rhyme too!

### Concepts

There are many basic concepts that will be helpful to your child in school. These include:

- spatial concepts/prepositions such as "in," "on," "under," "behind," and "beside".
- time and relational concepts such as first, middle, and last, and first... then...
- quantity concepts, such as all, some, and none.
- categories or groups of objects, such as animals, vehicles/transportation, household items, tools, clothing, etc.
- what does/doesn't belong in a group, and the concepts "same" and "different."

### Social/Attention Skills

Social interactions are a huge part of the transition into kindergarten. It will be expected that your child be able to:

- participate in games with rules and turn-taking.
- participate in group activities.
- sit in a circle for up to 10 minutes.
- stay with a structured activity for 10-12 minutes.

The single most important thing to remember when working on any of these skills is to **MAKE IT FUN!!!** If you make learning into a game and ensure your child is having fun, their learning will happen more quickly and will be more likely to be retained.

Surrey Early Speech and Language Program

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## Advocacy – You can make a difference!

By: Linda Spencer

**Being involved in your child's intervention and schooling makes a difference.** Parents who participate in informed decision making about their child's intervention based on knowing their child and family best are then able to implement strategies and monitor their child on a daily basis. These parents are getting information from professionals and integrating that information together with their own knowledge of their child to appropriately advocate for resources and support.

### **Some ways to begin to advocate for your child include:**

- Gather information through talking with other parents;
- Ask questions;
- Clearly state your opinions/feelings regarding your child's and families needs;
- Look at your style of communicating and learn how an assertive style is more effective than an aggressive or passive style

**Define your role on your child's team of professionals. Consider yourself an 'expert' on your own child.** You have valuable information that is important for making decisions. The information you have is important as you and your team try out various strategies that can help your child develop successful communication.

### **Some benefits, as shared by parents, to working as a team with professionals include:**

- Feeling respected and listened to when they contribute their observations about their child;
- Better problem solving and awareness from others, such as teachers, other family members and friends, when they have had the opportunity to describe their child's needs and abilities;
- More confidence about detecting changes and having concerns when one is actively involved in assessing and monitoring their own child;
- More aware of their child's progress and what they are doing that has a positive effect on their child's development

**At some point you may be invited or initiate a team meeting about your child.** To some parents, these meetings may feel intimidating. Below are some hints that other parents have found useful:

#### GETTING PREPARED

- Make a list of questions/concerns you would like addressed at the meeting;
- Make a list of your child's strengths;
- List what you would like your child to be able to do within the next year ... the goals, objectives, skills & knowledge you hope your child will acquire. **Be specific, be realistic!**
- List the types of services/professionals you feel are needed in order for those goals to be

achieved. Compromises may be necessary so, consider your priorities and on which of them you are willing to yield.

- Think of any possible conflicts which may occur and list possible solutions to any of these. Sometimes professionals are more willing to adjust a plan or solve a problem if you are able to suggest possible alternatives;
- Invite a spouse or friend to attend with you and have one of you prepared to take notes at the meeting (may also consider audio/videotaping);
- Gather all reports/records of your child and bring to the meeting;
- Be knowledgeable about the law, your child's rights to an appropriate education and about funding for special services;
- Request the services of a language interpreter if needed. When sharing information about your child, it is important to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings between you and the professionals.

#### AT THE MEETING

- Be on time;
- State at the beginning what you want on the agenda (what you want to discuss);
- Be friendly. Don't put your other team members on the defensive by starting the meeting as if you are ready to do battle;
- Take notes to help you recall specific points of discussion;
- Ask for an explanation of any terms you do not understand. Use wording such as "It is important to me to understand everything we discuss today, so I may stop someone and ask for clarification of a term I am not familiar with."
- Give praise to team members who have been helpful, doing a good job, etc.;
- Offer possible solutions rather than lay blame;
- Don't hesitate to question any recommendations or statements made by a professional. **Remember, the team is discussing your child!**
- If a rule or policy is mentioned, you may want to ask to see it documented in writing;
- Make sure results of the meeting are summarized in a clear manner at the end. If specific services have been agreed to by the professional team, make sure you keep a record of who will be doing what and by when;
- If you not in agreement with the decisions made, ask about the appeal process. Use wording such as "I am not in agreement with these decisions. I understand that I have the right to appeal this decision. I need you to inform me of the appeal process in this school district/agency/or other."

**You can and do make a difference for your child!**

Additions From: Ellen Peterson, Acting Executive Director



BC Family Hearing Resource Society receives Three-Year Accreditation! Surveyors Margo Van Kleeck and Polly Davis conducted our second site survey on March 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Since 1966 CARF has assisted organizations like ours, throughout Canada and the United States, in achieving and maintaining top-notch programming for our clients and a first-rate working environment for our staff. Being accredited demonstrates that we comply with the highest possible internationally accepted standards of organizational integrity and service provision.

We worked very hard to prepare and it showed. This is some of what CARF had to say about BCRHRS:

“Positive, strong, and vibrant leadership is provided by the acting executive director and management team that is highly motivated and dedicated to the organization’s mission.”

“Funders appreciate the professionalism and quality of services provided to persons served. “I have complete confidence in the staff of this organization,” stated a Ministry of Children and Family Development staff member.”

“The organization has dedicated and enthusiastic professional staff members who are responsive to the needs of persons served. There is a noticeable commitment to improving the quality of the lives of persons served.”

“A culture of teamwork, mutual respect, cooperation, and open communication is evidenced throughout the organization.”

“Parent satisfaction is very high. Each and every family contacted had glowing praise for individual staff members as well as the employees of the entire organization”.

“The physical facility of BC Family Hearing Resource Society continues to be an outstanding environment for meeting the needs of the children served. It is highly reputed across Canada.

Sincere thanks to our many families, volunteers, funders and staff who participated in our site survey. They shared their experiences and stories with our surveyors which ensured our tremendous success. We could not be more proud of our collective accomplishments.

### [Walking for Bright Futures](#)

The 7th annual Elks & Royal Purple Walk-a-thon to support BC Family Hearing Resource Society’s for young deaf and hard of hearing children and children with speech and language needs was held Sunday, May 25th, 2008.

This fun, non-competitive event was hosted at Campbell Valley Park and raised over \$10,000! Volunteers, walkers and donors participated to make this year’s event a success. Special thank you to our emcee Jim McGregor who kicked off the event. Families enjoyed a barbecue after the event and lots of fun family activities.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of the Elks & Order of the Royal Purple who founded the BCFHRS and continue to support its charitable efforts. If you’re interested in helping out with next year’s Walk-a-thon, please contact Ellen Peterson, Acting Executive Director at the Centre. Next year’s Walk-a-thon is already schedule for May 24, 2009 – see you there!!

