

Introduction to the Little Talks Project

Language development in young children

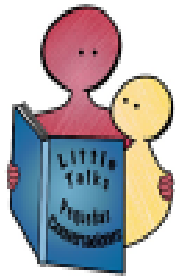
Talking to young children throughout their daily activities may be one of the most important ways that parents nurture language learning. The sheer number and variety of words that a young child hears has been associated with the rate of language growth, but there are a number of ways that parents can make their talk with children even more beneficial. Following a child's lead and utilizing joint attention from the earliest months supports a child's language development. Parents also support early language learning by focusing talk on what a child is observing and doing. As children develop, parents can talk in more detail and complexity about the child's interests. As the people who know their children best, parents can make their language challenging yet comprehensible to the child, scaffolding further growth. Additionally, an adult's positive responses to a child's communications, whether they are gestures, babbles, words, or sentences, provide the message that language is important and interesting. They provide opportunities for feedback on what the child is saying and how he or she says it. Finally, positive and warm exchanges between parent and child promote the bonding and attachment that foster positive development.

Book sharing

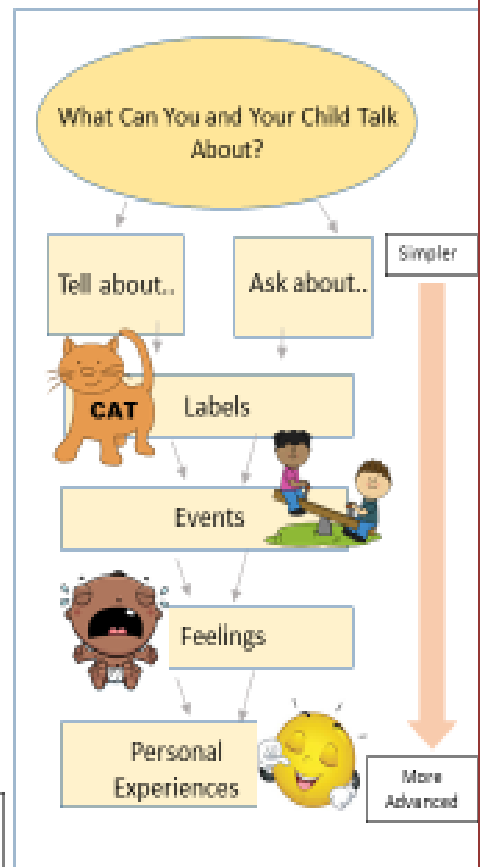
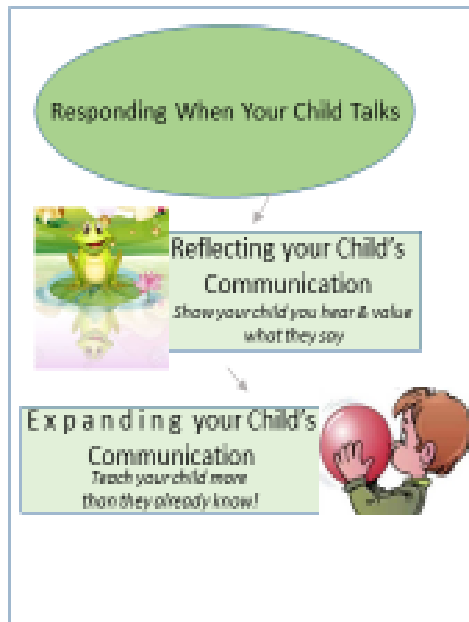
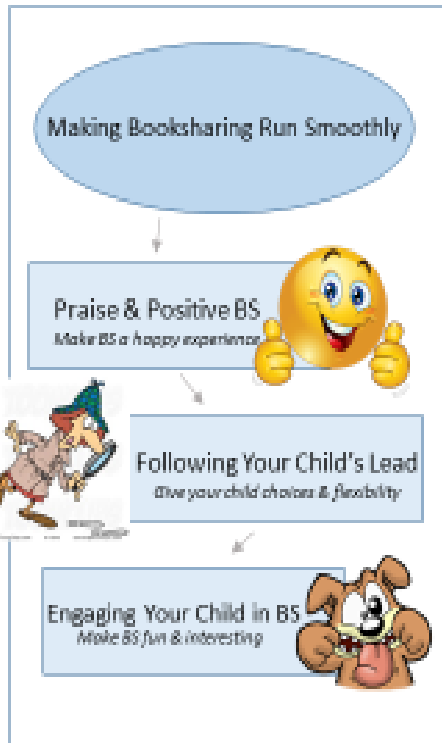
Sharing picture books with children provides a concrete opportunity to talk with a child. Book sharing provides avenues for vocabulary and oral language development, as books often portray a wider range of things than what is in the immediate environment. Adults tend to talk in more complex ways during reading than during other interactions. Furthermore, books support young children's development of symbolic and abstract thinking, as they come to realize that what is on the pages represents objects and events in the real world. Finally, book sharing supports a child's understanding of narrative and story.

In Little Talks, we use the term "book sharing" rather than "book reading." Since our objective is to support parents in talking with their children, we view interactions over books as opportunities to talk about the whole book flexibly, not just read the text. Talking about the pictures allows parents to tailor the interaction to the child's interest and skills, as opposed to reading a text that might be too simple to hold the child's interest or too complex for the child to understand. Additionally, book sharing gives the child opportunities to respond and be more actively engaged in the interaction. Active responding during book reading is associated with increased language learning. However, there is nothing wrong with book reading; parents may feel most comfortable orienting themselves to a new book by reading it. The text in books can provide valuable information, particularly in non-fiction, and books with rhythm and rhyme support other pre-literacy skills.





Little Talks Lesson Library



There is no right or wrong order to teach and learn the Little Talks lessons 😊

Notes:

This diagram includes each of the lessons included in the Little Talks curriculum.

