



Your early learning guide for infants, toddlers and three-year-olds

facilitator guide

Module 4:

Language & Communication Development

Competency-Based Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, successful participants will be able to:

- List the stages of language development
- Define self-Talk and parallel talk in their own words
- Identify examples recasting and extension in a video observation
- Compose open-ended questions to extend language
- Create a list of inclusion strategies based on a scenario

Description of Target Audience

Early child care and education practitioners and administrators

Training Methodologies/ Strategies Utilized

Presentation with content and lecture - Participants will view a PowerPoint (PPT) presentation with illustrations and key points. Trainer will lecture on content, providing open floor for comments and questions.

Handouts – Participants will receive a packet that includes:

- Participant Guide
- Language “Mixer” Activity
- Infant and Toddler Book List

Small Group Discussion - Discuss prompts in small groups

Question and Answers - Time will be reserved at the end of the presentation for questions and reactions

Sequence of Training

Content

Methods / Activities

Time Allotment

Introduction of facilitator and topic

Agenda overview and introduce Participant Guide

5 min

Language Development Theory	PPT and participant responses	5
Language Mastery		25
Child and Caregiver by Age		15
Open-ended Questions		10
Emergent Literacy		10
Promoting Literacy		15
Inclusion		15
Conclusion and Q&A		5
Total Length		1.75 hours

Slide 1: Welcome. Introduce the workshop.

I would like to welcome all of you to **Language and Communication Development**. My goal today is to give you an overview of how infants and toddlers develop language and begin to communicate. We will also discuss the importance of responsive caregiving and the environment, caring for children with special needs, and best practices for high-quality programs.

Introduce yourself

Name, position, experience with Little Texans, Big Futures

Determine the audience

Ask participants about their role with young children. With what age group do they work? Do they work in centers, homes, or public schools? How long have they been working with young children?

TRAINER TIP:

Taking a few minutes to find out who your audience is at the beginning of the workshop allows for immediate engagement and helps you to personalize aspects of the training. For example, if there is a highly experienced infant teacher, you can solicit examples and responses from her as you move through the material.

Review any “housekeeping logistics” such as location of bathroom, any planned breaks, ending time, etc.

Slide 2: Agenda

How do children learn language so naturally and so rapidly? Without studying a book or taking a class, they are speaking in full sentences, conjugating verbs, and applying complicated grammar rules to new words. Language development occurs so naturally and seemingly effortlessly, that we often take it for granted, assuming that all babies will learn to talk and someday to read. However, language development is a critical and complicated task for young children.

During our session today, we will be discussing the theories on how we acquire language and the stages and indicators of language development. We will examine emergent literacy and its connection to lifelong success. We will discuss factors that influence language development and best practices for providers. Finally, we will share a few ways to create inclusive programs for those children with special needs.

As we cover each area, we will focus on your role as the caregiver in supporting the child’s language development and emerging literacy.

You each have a **Participant Guide**. As we go through the material today, there are opportunities to take notes, add information and extend your learning.

Slide 3: Objectives

The objectives for today’s session are in your guide. After completing this training, you will be able to:

- List the stages of language development
- Define Self-Talk and Parallel Talk in their own words
- Identify examples recasting and extension in a video observation
- Compose open-ended questions to extend language
- Create a list of inclusion strategies based on a scenario

Slide 4: Language Development

There are three theoretical approaches to how infants and toddlers learn language and begin to communicate. While no single theory can fully explain the amazing phenomena of such rapid acquisition of such a complex skill, taken together these theories offer insights into the process and offer information on how to support language development. This slide presents the theories that contribute to language development. Please use page 1 of your Participant Guide to take notes.

Slide 5: Language Development

First is the Nativist approach to language development; it states simply that we are born with everything we need to learn and use language. This idea began in the 1950s, but became

popular in the 1970's with the work of an American linguist and cognitive scientist named Noam Chomsky. Because young children acquire language so quickly and easily, while still too young to have the cognitive ability to understand the rules and structure of language, Chomsky proposed that there is an inborn language acquisition device, or LAD, in the brain and the LAD facilitates the learning and using language. While the LAD has never been located, it is generally accepted that the brain is 'wired' for language and that humans are biologically programmed to learn language. An infant's ability to learn a home language is clearly a very different process than an adult learning a second language, supporting the idea of pre-wiring for language acquisition.

Slide 6: Language Development

Research in the 1980's indicated that infants have the ability to differentiate any sound in any language, but lose that ability by the end of the first year, retaining only those that are used in their daily interactions. This links the nativist approach with that of social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura.

Around the same time that Chomsky was developing his theory on language, Albert Bandura was working on a theory of his own. Bandura, who is a renowned psychologist at Stanford University, proposed that all behaviors, including language, are learned solely by watching models. Infants and toddlers acquire language by listening to others and then repeating it. But is just having heard language enough? If all young children need is a model to learn language, will watching television do it?

No, it won't. While models for language are important and infants' and toddlers' natural curiosity to make sense of the world and makes language acquisition a priority for the brain, these theories do not go far enough to explain how language is acquired.

Slide 7: Language Development

The Interactionist theory is based on Lev Vygotsky's theory of Psychosocial Development. Jerome Bruner, another American psychologist, expanded Vygotsky's theory to language acquisition. Bruner proposed it is a combination of biological and environmental factors. More than that, simply seeing the language modeled or hearing it spoken is not enough; infants need a social responsiveness to fully develop language. The interaction between the caregiver and the child provides a social context for language, facilitating learning and communication.

Slide 8: Responsive Caregiving

An interactive and responsive relationship with a loving and attentive caregiver is crucial to language development. Responsive caregivers are attentive to a child's needs and respond quickly and consistently to meet those needs. This cycle of responsiveness assures the child that he or she is safe and cared for. When the child's needs are met and they have secure attachment to a caregiver, they are free to focus on exploring the environment.

Slide 9: Mastering Language

To master a spoken language, a child must learn basic sounds, how sounds are combined to form words, how words are combined to form meaningful sentences, what words and sentences mean, and how to use language effectively in social interactions. Language mastery includes phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Phonology is the basic units of sounds in any given language. The English language is made up of 45 phonemes, or sounds. In addition to learning these sounds, a child must also learn which sounds can be combined, as in 'st', and which sounds cannot, as in 'sb'. Infants and toddlers must be able to hear and to pronounce the phonemes in order to make sense of the speech they hear and to be understood when they speak.

Rules of **morphology** are rules for forming words from sounds; for example, adding 'ed' to make a verb past tense and 's' to create plural nouns. The exceptions to the rules must also be learned. Syntax refers to the rules of forming sentences from words. Syntax is also crucial to being understood. Spot bit Jane has a very different meaning from Jane bit Spot, even though it contains all of the same phonemes. Spot Jane bit has the right meaning, but doesn't follow traditional English sentence structure.

Semantics is the aspect of language that concerns meanings. Words stand for things, and a child must determine the connection between words and things. Understanding semantics depends on understanding the world and is therefore tied to cognitive and social development.

Finally, **pragmatics** must be mastered. These are the rules specifying how language is used appropriately in different social contexts. It is learning when to say what to whom. Effective communication requires taking into account who the listener is, what they already know, and what they need or want to hear.

In addition to mastering all of these aspects of language, a successful communicator will also need to master intonation, which is the variations in pitch, timing, and volume. The nonverbal communication that accompanies language is also important (facial expressions, body language, gestures). Children can effectively use all of these skills by the time they get to preschool. They will continue to refine their communication, but the basics of language are present.

Slide 10: Stages of Language

Infants begin making and responding to sounds from birth. Crying, gurgling, and grunts are important first steps in language development. They are also effective means of communicating with the caregiver. These early sounds help infants to learn airflow, tongue positions, and exercise vocal cords. At about 6-8 weeks, infants begin repeating vowel-like sounds.

Slide 11: Stages of Language

Sounds – This is **cooing** and is usually an expression of contentment. At this age, infants respond to the melody of speech, rather than the words.

Infants expand their vocalizing again at around 3-4 months when they add consonant sounds.

Babbling begins just after consonants, usually around 4-6 months. Babbling is the repeating consonant-vowel combinations, 'baba' or 'dada'. All infants in the world, even deaf infants, sound very much alike during the babbling stage. However, within a few months they start adopting the intonations of their caregivers and begin focusing on the phonemes of their home language, effectively getting an 'accent'. During this time, infants are also beginning to learn semantics, the connection between things and words. By using joint attention and repetition, caregivers begin to label objects for the infant.

Slide 12: Stages of Language

First words, or **holophrases**, appear around the first year. These words are referred to as holophrases because a single word conveys an entire sentence and the meaning can shift depending on how and in what context they are said; for example, an infant might point to a cup on the counter and ask, "Cup?", as in, 'is that my cup?', they might hold it and say, "Cup." to simply identify it as a cup, and they might ask for a cup using a whining tone. All three meanings are clearly conveyed using just the one word, with varying intonation, and body language. First words are almost all related to familiar objects and actions and they are almost exclusively nouns.

Slide 13: Stages of Language

Initially, infants acquire one word at a time and months may pass before they have 10 words. Then, at around 18 months when they have about 30-50 words, they have a **vocabulary spurt** and begin learning words much more quickly. They triple their vocabulary by around 20 months and then double it again by 24 months. During the vocabulary spurt, toddlers realize that everything has a name and they want to learn them all.

Around this same time, toddlers begin to use **telegraphic speech**, combining two words into a simple sentence. They utilize functional grammar to convey meaning, omitting the extras like articles and prepositions. Just as in holophrases, intonation and gestures can change the meaning to apply to the context. Between 2 and 5, children learn to speak in complex, adult-like sentences. They move from two- word telegraphic speech, to three-word, and then begin to add in function words, such as the and are, until they are using the rules of adult language.

Slide 14: Stages of Language

At around age 3, children begin mastering the rules of grammar. As they start to understand a rule, such as adding 'ed' to create past tense, they will over-generalize the rule, applying it to all verbs, including words such as 'go', for examples. So a child that was previously saying 'went', may begin saying 'goed'. Oddly enough, this is a sign of progress. The child was using 'went' as an imitation of adult speech. As they start to understand the rules of morphology and apply them, they are saying 'goed' in a conscience effort to understand how language works. So, you can see how toddlers gradually progress through the different stages of language, first using a single word to convey an entire sentence, then using two words into simple sentences, and eventually they

move to incorporating the rules of grammar into sentences.

Slide 15: Language Acquisition

Again, language acquisition is a remarkable achievement in a very short amount of time. The chart shows how dramatic the vocabulary spurt is, resulting in 4000 words by age 4. Just as responsive caregiving and enriched environment and experiences impact physical, social and emotional, and cognitive development, they are also critical to language development.

In this next section, we are going to look at how caregivers support children as they listen and understand language, and then begin speaking and communicating.

Slide 16: Language “Mixer” Activity

Introduce the Language “Mixer” Activity to participants. Ask participants to get out their “Mixer” activity handout and take a few minutes and reflect on a few of the questions that are asked in the Mixer. Tell them to write down their thoughts. Then they will find a person or two who has responded to the same questions and share what you’ve written with each other. Allow 10 minutes for participants to share experiences. Bring the participants back together and ask for volunteers to read some of their answers to the rest of the class.

Slide 17: Infant and Toddler Language

Read the slide and make the point that infants and toddlers’ brains are designed to learn language. Additional points from activity are:

- Young children model adults and children they admire through the context of relationships.
- These very early language experiences bring pleasure to the infant.
- Infants and toddlers learn language in the context of human relationships and experiences. Use this time to get on the floor, listen, talk and establish eye contact; these first relationships create the glue of a family, community and society.
- Allow for repetition of finger plays, songs, and stories for infants and toddlers to hear language.
- The language skills learned at this time from both the family and caregiver will help define children’s capacity for success in later life.

Slide 18: Culturally Appropriate Practice

Recall from Module 1, we touched briefly on how language is influenced by culture.

- It is important to be aware of your own social-culture influences and how language development experiences vary from one culture to another.
- Connecting with families in a way that is respectful is an essential part of language development with young children in your care.
- Parents are a resource and offer insights and perspectives on their child and the traditions

within their culture.

- Parents and caregivers working together can facilitate the optimal development of each child.

Slide 19: Listening and Understanding

We will now shift our focus to the three components that Language is divided up into, beginning with Listening and Understanding.

In the Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Guidelines, Language is divided into three different components: Listening and Understanding, Communication and Speaking, and Emergent Literacy.

The Listening and Understanding component includes indicators related to what words mean, how to make different forms out of a root word, and how to put words together in sentences. It also includes indicators related to listening and responding to the communication of others.

The indicators are:

1. Listens with interest to language of others
2. Responds to nonverbal and verbal communication of others
3. Begins to understand the rules of conversation

Slide 20: Communication and Speaking

The next component, Communication and Speaking, includes how young children use sounds, gestures, and words to get their needs met. It focuses on how young children learn language and how they begin to use it.

The indicators are:

1. Uses consistent sounds, gestures, or words to communicate for a variety of purposes
2. Imitates sounds, gestures, signs, or words
3. Uses language to engage in simple conversations

Slide 21: 0-8 Months

Infants begin communicating with their caregiver at birth. They are comforted by familiar and soothing sounds and intently focus on faces. They communicate their needs by crying and their contentment with cooing. In just a few weeks after birth, they begin to smile when spoken to and maintain eye contact.

They communicate through body language, holding out their arms to be picked up; reaching, clapping, and turning in response to familiar words and phrases. They also begin to use joint attention to communicate and as a tool for learning the names of objects. Joint attention is when an infant follows the gaze of a caregiver to an object.

Slide 22: Reflection

Tell participants to define the two terms in their own words on the Participant Guide. Allow a few minutes for participants to write down their thoughts on meaning of the two terms. Tell participants that we will find out the definitions of the two words as we move forward through this training and they will be able to compare them with what they have written. Encourage participants to make notes as we go along.

Slide 23: Caregiver Responses

Although infants are tuned into language from birth, they learn language through interactions and imitation. A caregiver that encourages an infant's efforts at communication and looks for opportunities to communicate with them scaffolds their language development. First and foremost, the caregiver should build a relationship with the infant. Infants, like adults, are more likely to engage and be attentive to someone that they care about. The relationship is built by warm, responsive caregiving and active engagement. Very young infants respond positively to a soft, high-pitched, melodic voice. This is sometimes referred to as 'motherese'. It isn't baby-talk.

Infants initiate communication frequently and use joint attention to share experiences and discoveries with their caregiver. Caregivers should be tuned into the child and responsive to their attempts to engage. When engaged with the infant, listen and respond. Talk with the child, not at the child. Take conversation turns, waiting after speaking or cooing to the baby for them to make a response. Watch for and respond to times when the infant wants to engage in communication. Infants engage through non-verbal communication by holding up their arms to be held, laying their head on your shoulder for a cuddle, or flapping their arms with excitement. Responding to this non-verbal communication reinforces the infants desire to communicate and tells them that they are heard.

Babies need to hear lots of language. It can sometimes be challenging for a caregiver to remember to use language with infants, but it is very important. Infants are listening and learning all of the time. Self talk is when you describe to the baby what you are doing, seeing, or feeling. For example, "I can see that you are getting hungry. I am warming up your bottle." Parallel talk is when you describe to the infant what they are experiencing, doing, or seeing; for example, "You are really trying to get to that toy. You are almost there!" or "You must have been hungry, you drank your bottle fast". Think of it as narrating the day for the infant, providing the language that goes along with what they see. The caregiver is modeling language and engaging an infant in a type of conversation about their world.

For some caregivers, this comes very naturally. For others, perhaps those that are quiet or feel awkward, it takes an effort and practice.

Through self-talk and parallel-talk, the caregiver can expand vocabulary by applying a word or label to the objects in the infant's environment. Infants at this stage are eager for interaction and love rhymes, songs and games. Songs, word games, and rhymes introduce vocabulary and engage the infant, promoting listening and interacting. Sound and word games that are interactive also mimic the turns of a conversations – such as beating a drum.

Books are for babies, too. Although very young infants cannot follow a storyline, they are stimulated by the flow of language. Infants tune into pictures of familiar objects. Regardless of the type of book, the experience of reading and being read to are important to language development. Having books available in the environment allows older infants to initiate reading by bringing a book to the caregiver. Being held close to the caregiver and sharing a book is something that an infant should experience every day.

Slide 24: 8-18 Months

During this time, infants' receptive language is far more refined. They can understand much of what they hear. This is demonstrated by their ability to follow simple instructions like, "go get your ball". They recognize the names of familiar objects and respond to their own name. They turn their attention to someone that is speaking and make eye contact.

This is also an exciting time of first words. Infants begin to communicate verbally with one word phrases accompanied by hand gestures and non-verbal cues to impart meaning. These holophrases can be used to convey an entire thought or sentence. By 18 months, they may have as many as 50 words. However, the rate of language acquisition varies greatly based on the individual child. It is not unusual for a child to have only a few words at 18 months, particularly if they are effectively communicating with their caregivers non-verbally.

Slide 25: Caregiver Responses

Caregivers who model listening and responding with young children help to foster healthy self-esteem as well as provide an avenue for learning language.

Slide 26: 18-36 Months

This is a period of rapid language acquisition. Toddlers listen, respond and gain new words every day. Receptive language also continues to develop quickly and they can follow two-step instructions. Their mastery of communication also allows them to appreciate and respond to funny comments and rhymes. They begin to engage in meaningful verbal interactions with peers, listening and paying attention to one another.

During this time, toddlers move quickly from holophrases to two-word and three-word sentences. Telegraphic speech (or combining two words) develops into more complex sentence structure by age three.

Slide 27: Caregiver Responses

As toddlers become more verbal and begin to use simple phrases, caregivers can use techniques to scaffold their language development. Recasting and expansion are two important tools for supporting toddler language development. Recasting is simply restating the child's sentence using correct grammar. It does not involve pointing out the mistake or correcting the child, simply recasting their comment; for example, if a child says "Spot eated," the caregiver would respond "That's right, Spot ate." Expansion takes it one step further by expanding the child's statement;

“That’s right, Spot ate all of his dinner. He was hungry.” In this way, the caregiver is modeling language and increasing vocabulary.

Caregivers can use language to describe emotions and help toddlers identify their feelings. Toddlers are often reminded to ‘use their words’ when they are upset or in a conflict with a peer. In order to learn to use their words in emotional situations, they need lots of modeling and support. Caregivers can demonstrate the powerful ability of words to regulate emotions and resolve conflict but using rich emotional language when comforting a toddler. Rather than telling a crying or upset toddler “you’re fine,” help them find the words to identify their feelings. “It looks like you are really upset. I know it must make you sad to lose that toy. Can I hold you or help you find a new toy?”

Asking open-ended questions also extends learning. We will talk more about open-ended questions in a few minutes.

Provide toddlers with a variety of new materials and experiences. Discovering new things and the language that goes with these discoveries expands vocabulary. Rotating classroom materials frequently keeps toddlers engaged in their environment. Walks outside are rich with new experience and language. Follow the children’s lead and talk about the things they find interesting.

Lots of opportunities for reading should be available every day; teacher led reading in small groups and one-on-one, as well as plenty of space and time for toddlers to explore books independently.

Slide 28: Extending Language

Direct participants to take out their Participant Guide and turn to page 2. Explain that they will be watching a video and listening for examples of recasting, extending language, and new vocabulary.

Slide 29: Extending Language

Play video

Slide 30: Extending Language

Video 1 – Direct participants to their Guide and allow them to reflect on the video for a few minutes. What examples of recasting and extending language did they hear? What new vocabulary did the caregiver introduce?

In this video, the teacher uses the recasting tool to restate the child’s sentence using correct grammar. She is also extending the child’s language as they communicate together. She converts his holophrase into a complete sentence and expands his vocabulary.

Give examples of new vocabulary that was introduced in the video. Ask participants for their

thoughts on what they saw.

Slide 31: 36-48 Months

Three-year-olds are able to effectively use language to communicate. They understand the rules of conversation and begin to engage in more meaningful and productive conversations with peers and caregivers. They can answer questions related to who, what, when, where and why, as well as some more complex questions such as how and if/then. They can follow three-step instructions. Three-year-olds can use multiple words to describe and communicate their feelings and begin to resolve conflict and provide comfort with language. They begin using more intellectual speech, such as “I think” and “idea” and “guess” that indicate a thought process. Three-year-olds can more consistently apply past tense and possessive grammar rules and can more accurately use pronouns like he, her, they and we.

Slide 32: Caregiver Responses

Although direct interactions between the caregiver and child remain an important part of language development, peer interactions are more frequent at this stage. The caregiver’s role is to create an environment that is supportive of peer interactions. A well-defined classroom with learning centers, spaces for small group and one-on-one activities, provides children with opportunities to gather. Engaging materials that foster problem-solving and require cooperation (i.e. simple board games, dramatic play, and construction materials) support extended conversations. Caregivers provide consistent and clear expectations that allow children to explore with confidence.

Small and large group activities that include reading, storytelling, singing, and word games extend vocabulary and model effective social communication.

Slide 33: Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions have many possible answers. Rather than “Do you think the puppy is sad?”, which can be answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, an open-ended question would ask “How do you think the puppy is feeling?”. Open-ended questions allow for more meaningful interactions and give children an opportunity to express their feelings and perspectives. Teachers can prompt critical thinking and encourage discussion with these types of questions. As children compose answers, they organize their thoughts to form a response. Open-ended questions also provide teachers with valuable information about what a child is thinking or feeling.

It is not always appropriate to use an open-ended question; if you are seeking a specific answer, than a closed-ended question is more appropriate.

When asking open-ended questions, show genuine interest in what the child is thinking and ask questions that follow the child’s interests. Be open to different opinions and ideas and encourage the child to ask questions, too. Be aware of the child’s level of interest and energy.

Composing open-ended questions can be more challenging than closed-ended questions and

takes practice to make it a habit. Let's try a few of the exercises in your participant's guide.

Slide 34: Open-ended Questions

Activity 1 – On page 2 of your guide, allow participants 5 minutes to rephrase the closed-ended questions into open-ended questions.

Slide 35: Open-ended Questions

Activity 1 – Show the examples on the slide and ask for a few participants to share their open-ended questions.

Slide 36: Emergent Literacy

The final component of Language Development is Emergent Literacy. Emergent Literacy includes all of a child's early experiences that contribute to their ability to eventually learn to read. Infants and toddlers are certainly not expected to read, but they are building the skills that will allow them to read at the appropriate time.

The indicators for Emergent Literacy are:

1. Shows interest in songs, rhymes, and stories
2. Develops interest in and involvement with books and other print materials
3. Begins to recognize and understand symbols
4. Begins to develop interests and skills related to emergent writing

Slide 37: Literacy

Literacy is not simply taught, and it's not something a child starts to learn in kindergarten or elementary school. It's a complex process that starts at birth, and includes learning in four basic areas: language, listening, writing, and reading.

Children not only develop the skills of language, listening, and writing, but also how they relate to the world of literacy; for example, when we read a book to children and we read the title and author, they are learning that all books have a title and author. They recognize that storybooks have a beginning, middle, and end and that there is often a problem for the characters to solve.

Listening skills help children listen for the parts of a word, identifying words that rhyme with each other. Young children begin to recognize that there are different types of writing; for example, a poem, a story, a list, and instructions are all written differently.

Slide 38: Promoting Literacy

Read, talk, play. A caregiver that promotes lots of play, reads lots of books, and talks a lot with (not at) a child is doing all of the right things to promote literacy.

We have already discussed the importance of meaningful interactions between caregiver and child. Those interactions are also the most important element in developing reading, listening, writing skills. A caregiver who stimulates a child's interests, scaffolds experiences, and responds to a child's earnest attempts to learn a skill, promotes early literacy and success. Caregivers who just use language to direct and instruct will not help children develop complex language skills.

Play provides an essential environment for literacy learning. Through play, children learn to become risk-takers, build confidence, and experiment with new skills in a safe environment. They become storytellers and create make-believe realities. Providing an enriched, engaging environment and allowing children to freely explore uninterrupted is an essential responsibility of the caregiver.

Reading should be a part of every day for infants, toddlers, and three-year-olds. Using the children's interests to encourage reading is critical to later literacy. A print-rich environment and conversations about reading and writing are also important.

Slide 39: Infants

Although infants don't fully appreciate the care of books, they should still have books available for exploration. Cloth, vinyl, and board books are most appropriate for young infants to explore independently. Create photo books with pictures of the infant and the infant's family. When reading to an infant, any book is appropriate. Hold and cuddle the infant while reading and interact. The goal is to involve the infant, not finish the story. So let the child set the pace and explore all that each page offers, pointing out familiar objects and giving the child time to respond; when the infant begins to lose interest, stop reading and move on to another activity.

Infants love rhyme, repetition, and rhythm. Singing, puppets, and finger plays are engaging and enhance literacy skills by introducing the parts of a story and the rhythm of storytelling. Infants love to hear their name interjected into a song.

Slide 40: Toddlers

Toddlers need a print rich environment. Labeling objects and materials, having their name on cubbies and personal items, and providing a variety of books will create opportunities for toddlers to draw connections between print and language. Materials to practice early writing skills, such as crayons and paint brushes, should be available as well.

Provide cozy places in the room for toddlers to explore books independently and read to them when they invite you to. Initiate small group reading several times a day. Make story time interactive and follow the children's interests, remember that the goal is not to finish the book but to extend language and learning. Use storytelling and music to expand vocabulary.

Slide 41: Three-year-olds

Three year olds also need a print rich environment. Create a writing center in the classroom that is stocked with a variety of writing supplies – pencils, crayons, lined and unlined paper, envelopes, notecards, etc. Provide books and writing materials in every center so the children can begin to draw connections between literacy and their own play experiences. Include a dramatic play, music and listening center that is available every day.

During large group time, use books, songs, storytelling, and dictation to scaffold emergent literacy. Expand learning by creating projects and activities related to books.

Slide 42: Inclusion

Infants and toddlers with special needs related to language can be successful in a traditional setting with the help of reasonable accommodations and supports.

Slide 43: Inclusion

Take a look at the scenario in your participant guide and work in your small group to develop some inclusion practices.

Direct participants to Activity 2 – In small groups, read through the scenario and create 2-3 inclusion strategies that might be appropriate for this child. Take about 5 minutes in small groups and then give the groups an opportunity to share with the group. Allow productive and appropriate discussion for 5 minutes.

Slide 44: Inclusion

Some strategies to mention are:

- Use signs when Phillip is doing routines
- Say name of children as well as sign
- Providing books/pictures with sign-language and hearing aids
- Talking to children about differences

TRAINER TIP:

If a discussion around a topic becomes polarized and unproductive, bring the group back together by summarizing the key issue and acknowledging that there are various perspectives. End the discussion with a statement everyone can agree with; for example, “Making reasonable and appropriate accommodations for children is simply meeting the individual needs of children. Something you do in your program every day.” And then move on without pausing for more comments.

Slide 45: Conclusion

Language Development and Emergent Literacy are critical to success in school and life. The earliest caregivers set the course for this development and contribute significantly to the child's success or struggle. Responsive caregiving, high-quality learning environments, rich in language and print, and lots of opportunities for reading all put the child on a path to literacy.

Take a moment to create a few action steps that you will implement as a result of this training. Share those with a partner.

If time allows, participants can share a few action items with the group. Open up the floor for questions. Allow maximum of 5 minutes for questions.

Thank the participants for attending.

