



## Maximizing Your Child's Language Development

The best way to prepare your child for school is to provide them with as many language experiences as possible. *A child's ultimate resource for learning to read and write is his spoken language* (Marie M. Clay, founder of *Reading Recovery*). There are many activities that parents can do to develop their child's language skills.

- **Read to your child every day.** Read and discuss books with your child with the same excitement and enthusiasm you would have watching a highly anticipated movie with your best friend. Discuss the pictures, plot, and meaning of the books. Relate the books to personal experiences. Ask questions and have your child ask you questions about the books.
- **Limit "screen time."** Research shows that there is a relationship between increased amounts of "screen time" (time spent on the computer, watching TV, and playing video games) and lower academic achievement scores.
- **Talk about everything you experience with your child in detail.** Talk about where you are and what you see when you go to the grocery store, restaurants, museums, church, and family vacations. Do not forget to talk about what you see and places you are passing whenever you are driving in the car. Have your child retell the events of the day.
- **Encourage your child to talk to adults.** Have them order food at restaurants, greet people with whom they come in contact at home, as well as while visiting others, and acknowledge people appropriately when they are out in public.
- **Expect your child to speak in complete sentences.** Do not accept one-word answers.
- **Be specific when you speak and expect the same from your child.** Use the specific names of people, places, and objects. Do not talk in non-specific terms. Avoid words like *stuff*, *thing*, *things*, *that one*, *one place*, *over there*. Do not let your child speak in non-specific terms, either. Ask them to use their words to explain, so that people better understand what they are saying.
- **Play language games.** Play category games, describing games, and/or board games.
- **Give your child a variety of hands-on experiences that encourage imagination.** Have your child play in the sand/dirt, build with old boxes, explore, play make-believe, and help you prepare meals.
- **Establish a consistent home routine.** Be consistent with family dinners, reading time, and bedtime.

The above activities will help build the necessary foundation for the early elementary school years. These experiences are vital for developing a confident and academically successful child at school.