

 Cincinnati Children's

Foundations for Communication in Children with Down Syndrome

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About



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Thomas Center for Down Syndrome

- Evaluations & treatment planning based on best practices and standard of care
- Education and advocacy
- Transition planning
- Care coordination, support, and assistance throughout childhood



“Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another”
Desmond Tutu

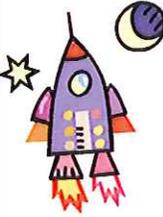


 **Influences**

- Medical
- Social
- Role of therapy
- Family needs
- Other aspects?







While there are similarities in how many children with Down syndrome communicate, each child has his or her own trajectory.

Cincinnati Children's **Communication Profile**

Strengths	Needs
Social understanding, empathy, & social skills	Hearing & Vision
Self help and daily living skills	Speech & Language
Visual short-term memory	Verbal Short-Term Memory & Working Memory
Visual learning a strength	Learning from listening
Reading	Numbers

Hodapp, Fidler, & Buckley, 2006

Cincinnati Children's **Importance of Strengths**

- Use strengths to encourage learning
- Bridge the gap between comprehension and verbal expression
- Early social skills support cognitive and language learning
- Use visual supports to help bypass difficulties with auditory and memory issues

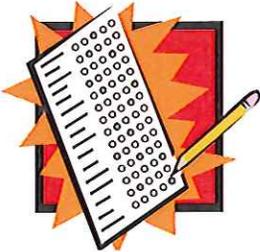
Cincinnati Children's **Com. Development in DS**

- Communication
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Speech



Cincinnati Children's Working Memory

- Listen, process, manipulate
- Writing and anticipating upcoming text
- Decoding unfamiliar words
- Mental arithmetic



Baddeley, A. (2003)

Cincinnati Children's Speech Issues

- Areas affecting speech
 - Hearing loss
 - Auditory processing
 - Verbal short-term memory
 - Motor concerns
 - Planning

Cincinnati Children's Early Intervention



- Shown to improve language outcomes in children with DS in adolescence
 - Larger vocabulary
 - Better articulation

 **Newborn**

Bonding



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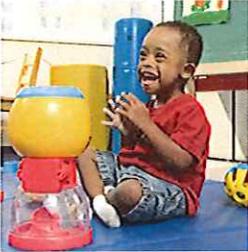
 **Infant**

- Engage in face-to-face interactions
- Encourage oral awareness and exploration
- Develop sound awareness and discrimination
- Social gestures and games
- Provide a variety of objects for play
- Read often
- Introduce sign language

 **Toddler**

- Encourage turn-taking play
- Encourage pretend play
- Sing songs and "follow-the-leader" games
- Read and point to pictures
- Continue signing
- Introduce sight word recognition*

 **Toddler**



- Explore printed word recognition programs
- Always leave time for a response
- Accept any attempt at a new word/sign
- Gather groups of objects to practice matching, naming, and categories

 **Preschool**

- Focus on speech and language skills
- Encourage peer interactions
- Use sight words as a cue for vocabulary development
- Model and expand utterances
- Use daily activities as a language experience
- Use "sound " and early concept books to build articulation skills
- Behavior expectations

 **Video**

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"Speech and language is central to all learning and the stage of the child's speech and language development will influence all aspects of the curriculum."
(Buckley, 1998)

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Video

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School Age

- Use "show and tell" activities
- Practice giving and taking directions
- Discuss cause and effect relationships
- Build his/her ability to see absurdities
- Practice telling stories



 **School Age**



- Look for ways to support learning
 - Visual Modifications
 - FM Systems
- Body Awareness
 - Public vs. private areas
 - Boundaries
- Direct social skills teaching –
 - Use role playing to develop “scripts”

 **School Age**

- Find opportunities to use verbal speech:
 - Centers (in lower grades)
 - Group projects
 - On teacher errands with less familiar adults
- Focus on understanding the hidden curriculum
 - Expectations that are unspoken

 **Video**

 **Targeting Working Memory**

- Sound & word discrimination games
- Memory games
- Encourage spoken language development

[More research on working memory in DS](#)



 **Augmenting Communication**

Low Tech

- PECS
- [Communication Skill Builder](#)



High Tech



 **School Success**

- We all function better when we know what to expect!
- The classroom:
 - Exciting
 - Unpredictable environment



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Strategies for Increasing Successful Communication

- Increase predictability
 - Increase attention to task
 - Reduce anxiety
 - Decrease behavioral challenge
 - Increase confidence to engage in activity

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Establishing Predictability

- **What** is happening, what is going to happen, and what are you supposed to be doing?
- **When** are you expected to start, stop or finish the activity?
- **Where** is the activity supposed to occur?
- **Why** are things happening as they are?

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Visual Supports

A structured timetable of daily and weekly activities will help your child understand what's going on and what to expect

Using Picture Schedules

- A picture schedule:
 - Can help compensate for weaknesses in receptive language
 - Can be checked and rechecked independently
 - Is much easier to understand than a purely verbal description of the day's events
- Schedules should be:
 - Customized to meet the needs of each child
 - Varied according to number of pictures and activities to ensure maximum comprehension and success

Picture This

Modifying Directions

- When providing information:
 - Present in a very concrete and specific way
 - State exactly *what* will happen and exactly *what* is wanted
 - Don't assume the child can "read between the lines"
- Avoid using negatives
- Tell the child what you want him/her to do
- Avoid use of abstract terms such as:
 - Wait
 - Maybe
 - Later

 **Social Stories**

Social stories are useful for:

- Preparing for new situations
- Building scripts for interaction
- Providing visual support and repetition for learning and retention
- Helping with behavior



 **Communication For Life!**

- Developing communication is a **future-focused** goal
- Social communication is essential for education, relationship building, and success as a community member



 **Web Resources**

- [Boston Hospital Speaker Series](#)
- [Down Syndrome Education USA](#)
- [Down Syndrome Clinics](#)
- [Down Syndrome Research and Practice](#)
- [Lettercase](#)
- [Talk - Down Syndrome](#) (DS specific)
- [National Down Syndrome Congress](#)
- [National Down Syndrome Society](#)

 **Therapy Resources (web and books)**

- [See and Learn](#) language and literacy downloads specific to DS
- [The Learning Program](#) free language and learning downloads
- [Speaking of Speech](#) Free materials exchange
- [Mommy Speech Therapy](#) – great for parents
- [iPad/iTouch Apps for Special Education](#)
- [The Social Skills Picture Book](#)

 **Books**

- [Classroom Language Skills for Children With Down Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Teachers](#)
- [Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome](#)
- [Fasten Your Seatbelt: A Crash Course for Brothers and Sisters on Down Syndrome](#)
- [Helping Children with Down Syndrome Communicate Better](#)
- [Woodbine Publishers Down syndrome series](#)
- [Working Memory and Learning: A Practical Guide for Teachers](#)

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