

Early Essentials Practice Moments – Language Development

Amanda Perez: Language is important to communication, but also the relationships we build with children, and the ways they understand themselves and their unique environments. Use this practice moment and the practice guide to explore how staff support language development and learning.

Let's start with Alicia and Matthew at Alicia's family child-care home in Frederick, Maryland. How does Alicia promote language development during this one-on-one time with Matthew during diapering?

Alicia: [Buzzes lips]

Matthew: [Buzzes lips]

Alicia: [Laughs, buzzes lips]

Matthew: [Buzzes lips]

Alicia: [Buzzes lips]

Matthew: [Buzzes lips]

Alicia: [Buzzes lips]

Matthew: [Buzzes lips]

Alicia: [Laughs]

Amanda: How is Matthew responding to this interaction?

Alicia: [Buzzes lips]

Matthew: [Giggles]

Amanda: How does Alicia ask for Matthew's input?

Alicia: You ready to get up? Up? Up? Yes, up. Up.

Amanda: Now let's watch this clip from a center-based Early Head Start program in Salem, Oregon. How does this teacher use language to follow this child's interest?

Teacher: It's water! Look the water is coming down from above.

Amanda: How does the teacher let this toddler know she's interested in this conversation?

Teacher: Where is the water going?

Child: Ahh!

Amanda: How does she use language to extend his learning?

Teacher: It goes inside this pipe. That's where the water goes.

Child: Ahh!

Teacher: Yes! That's where the water goes.

Child: Ah.

Teacher: Water.

Amanda: Finally, let's check in on this home visit in Alexandria, Virginia.

Home Visitor: The song that you sang at play group in Uyghur -- in your language?

Mother: Yeah, it was about star.

Home Visitor: Yeah, yeah. Will you sing that with us?

Mother: [Speaks Uyghur] [Singing in Uyghur]

Amanda: How does the home visitor support this interaction?

Mother: [Continues singing]

Amanda: What is this baby's response?

Mother: [Continues singing]

Amanda: What is Mom's?

Home Visitor: Yay! Clapping.

Amanda: So, three clips highlighting three different aspects of language development. What did you hear?

This family child-care provider is making the most of this routine one-on-one time with this baby. Listen to the way she follows his lead, echoes his sounds. He's learning the give-and-take of communication and the pleasure in it. Notice how she asks for his input and waits for his non-verbal response before she acts. She's telling him that his communication is important.

This teacher uses language to engage this toddler in learning. She follows his curiosity about what is happening in their environment, uses simple language to respond to his interest. She bends down to talk with him face-to-face, asks him questions to engage him in deeper observation and learning. Using words and interest, she honors his curiosity, helps him broaden his understanding of his world.

On this home visit, the child sits between her mother and her home visitor facing her mom. As Mom sings, she is clearly in the lead. Notice how Elanore watches both the mother and home visitor for cues. The home visitor echoes the hand movements and expressions of the mother as she can. In this short interaction, the home visitor celebrates the importance of this family's home language and Mom's important role in sharing it.

Want to learn more about supporting language development in infants and toddlers? Dig deeper using the resources listed in the practice guide, or watch Early Essentials Webisode 9, featuring Linda Espinosa, an early-childhood language researcher, and other experts talking about language development.

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