



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. V, No. 3

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ **Provide a language-rich environment**
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Provide a Language-Rich Environment

Building Listening Skills

Do you remember doing the *Hokey Pokey* when you were a young child? It's a fun movement song, but do you know that by clapping out the syllables, "that's what it's all a-bout" you were learning an important skill for reading success? This skill, called syllabication (recognizing the division of words by syllables) is one of the fundamental *phonological (sound) awareness* skills that is critical for learning to read. However, before children are able to clap out syllables, or succeed in discriminating between and identifying sounds in language, they must have basic skills in listening. Listening is the foundation for language development and reading success.

Building listening skills in children is important because:

- **Good listening skills lead to better learning.** Research has shown that there is a direct relationship between listening and learning. Listening comprehension is considered one of the skills most predictive of overall, long-term school success.
- **Listening skills are important for life success.** Good listening skills are needed to succeed in relationships, and in a career. Employers identify 'good listening' as one of the top three skills sought in job applicants.

Listening is more than hearing. Listening is an interactive process that enables the brain to *make meaning from the sounds that are heard*. It requires the ability to stay focused on the message, resist distractions, and understand the content of the message. Children do not learn listening skills on their own. It takes practice. Teaching children to listen begins with teaching them to attend to sounds in their environment and the sounds in language.

This newsletter will highlight activities and discuss ways to facilitate good listening skills in your child care environment and for each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Does Your Environment Support Listening?

We can ensure that our child care environment supports listening by:

- **Making deliberate efforts to attend to children's physical needs** (hunger, fatigue, bathroom needs, etc.) to reduce barriers to their listening.
- **Arranging the environment so that quiet areas are separated from noisy areas.**
- **Establishing cues to help children listen during transitions**, such as singing a clean up song, or getting a special blanket for children to sit on for story time.
- **Being a good role model.** As adults, we need to be good listeners ourselves. When talking to children, get down to their level, make eye contact and ask open-ended questions. Listen and show interest in what the children are saying.

Building Listening Skills in Infants

From the earliest days of life, most newborns' sense of hearing is fully functioning. Even in utero, a developing infant is capable of hearing as soon as his hearing organs are completely formed. At birth, infants prefer the sound of adult voices to other noises. You may notice a young infant listening and responding to familiar voices, a lullaby, and other singing. As he listens to the words and sounds around him, his brain is actively making neural connections.

Here are some ways you can promote listening skills with infants:

- *Respond to baby's coos, gurgles, and babblings.* Copy the sounds he makes, and smile and talk back to him.
- *Talk to the infant even if he cannot respond yet.* Talk about what you are doing and what you see -- when you prepare meals, change his diaper, move about your environment, and so on.
- *Use 'parentese' with the infant.* Using a singsong speech and exaggerated sounds and facial expressions encourage infants to listen and focus on what is said.



- *Read to baby.* Set aside time to read to him daily. Select simple books with big colorful pictures, and point to the pictures and repeat what you see. When baby makes any sounds or gestures, respond right away with words and smiles.
- *Point out sounds that you hear around you.* For example say, "I hear birds singing," or "Do you hear that? That's a siren."

Building Listening Skills in Toddlers

During the toddler years, children experience growth in language skills. Although every child develops at his own pace, most toddlers are alert to the people around them and pick up on the language they hear. The toddler will understand much more than he can say, and you may observe him trying to imitate many things he hears. He is also developing an awareness of the sounds in language, and the ability to detect and discriminate between different sounds (phonological awareness). This is crucial for learning to read.

Here are some ways you can help toddlers build listening and phonological awareness skills:

- *Read and sing nursery rhymes*, such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” The rhyme and rhythm will help children hear the sounds and syllables in words.
- *Give toddlers one-to two-step directions to follow*. For example, say, “Choose a book to read then come and sit with me,” or “Take your slippers off and put them on the shoe rack.”
- *Syllables*: Model and encourage children to identify the number of syllables in a name by clapping or stamping their feet while saying the name. (e.g. ‘Ryan’- clap “Ry” clap “an”).
- *Read rhyming books*. Find some favorites, and read these often. Emphasize the rhymes, repetition and steady beat of phrases.
- *Model sounds*: Let the children see your mouth and lips, teeth and tongue when you produce sounds (e.g. a snake makes a “sssss” sound). Enunciate and pronounce your speech sounds clearly.

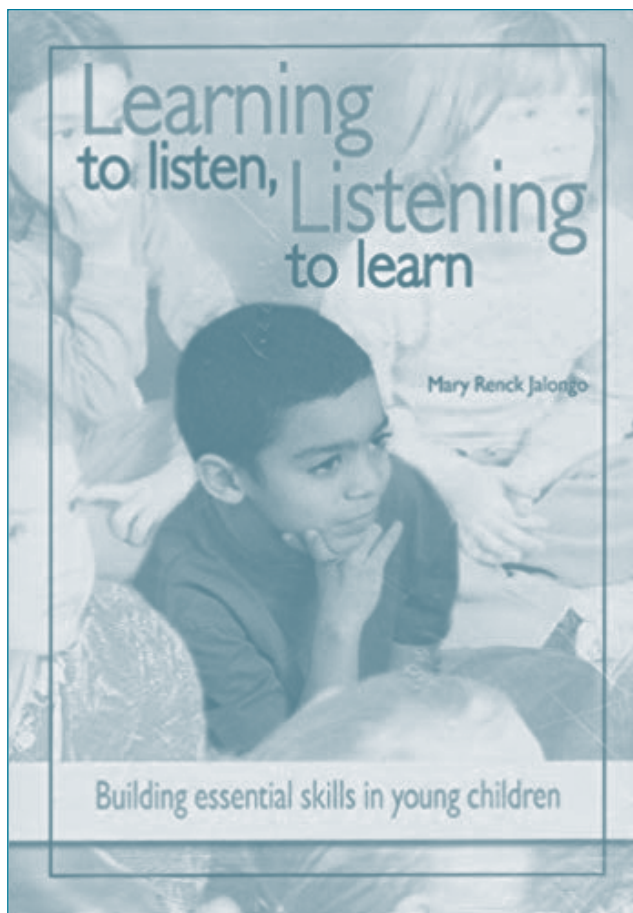


Building Listening Skills in Preschoolers

Children gain skill in phonological awareness, one of the key components of reading success, when they are given opportunities to *listen* and attend to the different sounds of language. Breaking words down into syllables (syllabication), recognizing rhyming words, and identifying words with the same initial sounds (such as *boy* and *blue*)—are all fundamental phonological awareness skills, critical for learning to read.

Here are some ways you can help preschoolers develop good listening and phonological awareness skills:

- *Expose preschoolers to games that purposely emphasize attentive listening*, such as Stop/Go games, Musical Statues, or “I Spy” (e.g., “I spy with my little eyes something that begins with /b/”).
- *Alphabet*: Look at alphabet books and sing alphabet songs.
- *Sequence of directions*: Give preschoolers a sequence of directions to follow, such as “Wash your hands, dry them with a paper towel, put your paper towel in the trash can, then turn off the light”.
- *Story Retell*: After reading a story to children, give them the opportunity to retell it to you in their own words.
- *Feely bag*: Take turns with the preschoolers to pull out objects from a bag that focus on:
 - *Rhyme*: Put pairs of items into a feely bag. If the two objects rhyme they can keep the pair.
 - *Syllables*: Place a variety of objects (e.g. toys, plastic food) into the bag. Have each child take out an object, say the word, and clap out how many syllables it has.



Citations:

Beeler, Terri. (1998). *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Jalongo, Mary Renck. (2008). *Learning to Listen, Listening to Learn*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Koralek, Derry, ed. (2003). *Spotlight on Young Children and Language*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



Join us on Facebook!
University of Hawaii Learning to Grow
www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii/

Learning to Grow Quality Child Care for Registered Home-Based Providers is a project of University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services ★ 808-462-4700 ★ www.learningtogrowhawaii.org