



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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Everyday Activities That Support Language Development By Wendy Overturf

Language development is essential for reading because children need to understand words before they can understand what they read. A strong vocabulary and good listening skills help children make sense of stories, follow directions, and recognize how language works. When children can express themselves and understand others, it becomes easier for them to connect sounds to words and comprehend text. Building language skills early gives children a strong foundation for becoming confident, successful readers.

Supporting your child's language development at home doesn't require special training or expensive materials. It just takes time, attention, and everyday interactions. Parents play a powerful role in helping children build communication skills, and the good news is that many of the most effective strategies fit naturally into daily routines. By being intentional with how you talk, listen, and engage, you can create a language-rich environment that supports your child's growth.

One of the simplest and most impactful things you can do is talk with your child throughout the day. Narrate what you're doing, describe your surroundings, and include them in conversations. For example, while cooking, you might say, "I'm cutting the apples. They're crunchy and sweet." This kind of modeling exposes children to new vocabulary and sentence structures. Even if your child is not yet speaking in full sentences, hearing language used consistently helps them learn how communication works.

Reading together is another key activity that promotes language development. Set aside time each day to read books your child enjoys. Make it interactive by asking questions, pointing to pictures, and encouraging your child to predict what might happen next. You don't need to read every word on the page. What matters most is the conversation you build around the story. This helps children develop comprehension skills, expand vocabulary, and learn how stories are structured.

Play is also an important opportunity for language learning. Whether your child is building with blocks, playing with dolls, or pretending to cook, you can join in and add language to their activities. Follow your child's lead and describe what they are doing or suggest ideas to extend the play. For example, "Your bear looks hungry—what should we feed him?" This type of interaction encourages imagination while reinforcing language in a meaningful context.

Another helpful strategy is to expand on what your child says. If your child says a single word like "car," you can respond with a fuller sentence such as, "Yes, that's a big red car driving fast!" This not only validates their attempt to communicate but also models more complex language. Over time, children begin to imitate these patterns and use longer, more detailed sentences themselves.

Listening to your child is also important. Give your child time to express themselves, even if it takes a while. Resist the urge to finish their sentences or correct them too quickly. Instead, show interest in what they are saying and respond with encouragement. Phrases like "Tell me more about that" or "That's a great idea" help build confidence and motivate children to keep communicating.

Finally, try to create a balance between screen time and real-life interaction. While some educational programs can be helpful, they should not replace conversations and shared experiences. Children learn language best through direct engagement with others, where they can ask questions, receive feedback, and practice using words in context.

By adding these simple strategies into your daily life, you can make a meaningful difference in your child's language development. Consistency, patience, and positive interactions are key and add up to big gains in communication skills.

All children develop at different rates. However, it is important for parents to monitor their child's [developmental milestones](#) because they help show how a child is learning to use and understand language. If you think your child is not meeting language development milestones, the first step is to talk with your child's pediatrician or healthcare provider. They can help determine if further evaluation is needed. They may recommend a speech-language evaluation or early intervention services. If it is determined that there is a delay, early intervention is important because young children learn and grow quickly during the early years and professional intervention may help prevent more significant challenges as your child ages.

WI FACETS Endless Possibilities Conference

[2026 WI FACETS Endless Possibilities Conference](#) – registration closes on July 29th!

Focus on: *Advocacy in Education and Beyond!*

Date: August 7, 2026, 8:30 - 3:00

Location: Waukesha County Technical College ([AJN Center](#)), Pewaukee, WI

Registration fee is \$50 per person [PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION](#) ** Scholarships are available**

Exhibitor options available: [EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION](#)

Are you ready to advocate for a future without limits? This conference brings together a powerful collective of voices to provide you with the tools for success at every stage of the journey.

Featured Highlights:

- Keynote: Advocating into Adulthood – Two young adults share their educational journeys
- Closing Address from [Dr. Jill Underly](#) - State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Raising Adults: A parent panel on life after school
- Student Voice Matters! Unlocking Opportunities with Self-Advocacy Skills
- Voices of the Future: A teen-led session on "Getting the Care You Need"
- The Power of Parent Advocacy with Learn in My Shoes
- Rightful Presence: Creating a Sense of True Belonging and Inherent Value in our Schools
- Advocacy Beyond Education: Panel of Experts with Lived Experience in Advocacy

**Complete with youth-led entertainment to power up the atmosphere, this event is a testament to the power of self-advocacy.

[Training for Home Language Interpreters: Supporting Families through the Special Education Process](#)

For those seeking training for home language interpreters for families at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, DPI has partnered with WI FACETS, LEAs, and other organizations to

develop a one-day training for home language interpreters who interpret for families at IEP meetings. Language interpretation training is a requirement to meet the provisions outlined in DPI's [Providing Language Assistance to Parents guidance document](#). The training provides increased awareness of state and federal regulations related to the educational rights of students who receive special education through an IEP and who may also be English Learners. The training also provides increased knowledge and resources related to legal responsibilities and ethical considerations for translation and interpretation of special education terms and concepts.

In-person trainings:

August 14, 2026 – [CESA 4](#) – [Flyer](#) - [Registration](#)

Please visit the [WI FACETS Training page](#) for information on upcoming trainings and other resources!

HOME LEARNING



July 4, 2026-250th Anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence

This is a great time to teach your child about the importance behind this occasion. Check out some of these read alouds.

- [Declaration of Independence for Kids](#)
- [On The Fourth of July](#)
- [My Fourth of July](#)
- [The Star-Spangled Banner](#)

15 Best Fourth of July Crafts for Preschoolers

Fourth of July crafts for preschoolers are a fantastic way to celebrate America's Independence Day. Crafting activities help children get creative while learning about the holiday's traditions and symbols. This website has fifteen fun and simple craft ideas to keep children entertained and excited for the big day.

Homemade 4th of July Snacks for Kids: Easy & Delicious Recipes

The 4th of July is all about celebrating with family, friends, and, of course, delicious food. This year make your holiday extra special with homemade snacks. These treats are easy to prepare and add a festive touch to your celebrations. Plus, when you make these with your children, they are getting practice with functional math skills such as measuring as well as practicing their reading.





July 26, 2026 National Disability Independence Day

National Disability Independence Day is celebrated on July 26th. It commemorates the passage of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) in 1990. The U.S. law made it illegal to discriminate against those with disabilities, changing the lives of millions of people nationwide.

[Read Aloud-When Charlie Meets](#)

[Emma](#) This book will help children think about disability, kindness, and how to behave when they meet someone who is different from them.

[Math Talk: 8 Ways to Do It on the Go](#)

[Math talk](#) is the words you use to point out early math concepts in your everyday life with kids. And thankfully, math talk can happen anytime — even on the go! Whether traveling to school, the grocery store, or to visit relatives by car, bus, or walking, there are easy ways to use math talk while on the go and on the road.



Incorporate Learning with Your Family's Summer Travels

A family vacation is a perfect opportunity to create a trip scrapbook that will be a lasting souvenir of family adventures. Collect postcards, brochures and menus from restaurants and tourist attractions. Encourage your child to write descriptions of the places you visited and tell stories about your family's escapades.

[Tornado Preparedness](#)

Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes a year. Peak tornado season in Wisconsin is April to August, but they can occur any time of year. It is important that children know how to be prepared for this weather emergency.

- [Rocket Rules Tornado Safety Video for kids, K to 2nd grade](#)
- [Build Your Tornado Kit- A Checklist](#)

When a tornado hits, it helps to have a kit stocked with basic survival items—things like food, water, clothes and important documents. Everyone in the house should be able to get to the supplies quickly because evacuation can be a last-minute scramble.

WI FACETS EVENTS

There are very limited number of webinars during the summer. However, be sure to check some of our online resources.

[IEP Mini-Modules](#)

These 30 to 40-minute modules break down what you need to know about the IEP process. You can watch through the entire ten-part series or jump right in with the modules that are most interesting to you. Clicking on the module will direct you to a registration page. After filling out the required information, you will be able access the recorded video(s).

[Training Webinar Recordings](#)

This link has many of our archived webinars in case you missed one or perhaps want to review it again. The webinars are all organized into categories. Just select the title of the webinar you would like to view. Please note: You will have to provide some basic registration information before you are able to access the recording. If there were slides that were used during the webinar, they are included as well.

[Supporting Literacy at Home](#)

Check out these self-directed, interactive online literacy modules—"Literacy Training Series for Families" on the WI FACETS website. The purpose of this series is to help families better

understand how to effectively support their children's literacy development at home and to increase communication with their children's teachers and school about literacy-related goals. While this information is beneficial to all families for supporting their children's literacy development, this series was specifically developed for families of students with special education needs.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This website has fact sheets about milestones of typical speech and language development. CPIR also provides information about speech and language impairments and links to many other resources related to speech and language development. Resources are also available in Spanish.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

This website has information about services for students with a speech or language impairment. There is information on the criteria for the disability category of speech or language impairment. The site also includes a [link](#) that provides more detail about the comprehensive special education evaluation.

[Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day](#) (from U.S. Department of Education)

This is a tip sheet designed for preschool teachers and other early childhood providers. However, most of the tips also apply to strategies parents can use with their children to develop speech and language skills.

[The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders \(NIDCD\)](#)

The site provides information on conditions related to voice, speech, and language.

[American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

On this site you can find information about your child's communication development from kindergarten through grade 5. This is also available in Spanish.

[How Does Your Child Hear and Talk?](#)

Your child starts communicating with you long before they say their first word. Learn more about what your child should do in their first 5 years and how you can help.

[The Stuttering Foundation](#)

This organization provides free online resources, services, and support to those who stutter and their families, as well as support for research into the causes of stuttering.

[icomunicate](#)

This website provides information on a wide variety of speech and language disorders (such as apraxia, phonological delay, aphasia, dysarthria, stuttering, etc.), communication development, hearing impairment, autism, brain injury, special needs, learning difficulties, and assistive communication (AAC).

[Start with a Book](#)

During the summer, many children will not get as much reading practice as they get in school. Books that engage the imagination can provide motivation to support skills until school starts again. The website gives some lists of books to captivate reluctant readers, including books for children of all ages.

[What's the Difference Between a Speech Impairment and a Language Disorder?](#)

Often the words speech and *language* are used interchangeably. However, these words have very different meanings. Check out the link to learn more.

[How to Teach Social Communication Skills to Children](#)

Check this website for ideas on how to teach social communication skills to your child.

[Fairplay](#)

The Fairplay website has a free *Screen Aware Early Childhood Action Kit* that contains strategies for managing screen use, information on the impacts of screen technologies, and resources for promoting screen awareness at home and in the classroom.

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

The CDC has a developmental milestone checklist and free Milestone Tracker App containing photos and videos to illustrate each milestone. Available in English and Spanish.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

[A Parent Friendly Guide on Prior Written Notice \(PWN\)](#)

Help Desk Specialists at WI FACETS frequently talk to parents about PWN. Prior Written Notice is a mandatory procedural safeguard under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) that requires schools to provide written documentation whenever they propose or refuse to change a student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement. Be sure to check out our newly developed parent friendly resource on PWN.

[Information Update Bulletin 24.02-Considering Services from a Speech-Language Pathologist for Students with Disability-Related Needs in the Area of Communication](#)

This bulletin focuses primarily on speech and language as a related service. It is meant to guide IEP teams in consideration of speech-language as a related service for students with communication needs.

RESEARCH

The Pedagogy of Play in Teaching of Reading: Low Tech and High Tech Interactive Reading Methods

Klein, Elizabeth (2024) "The Pedagogy of Play in Teaching of Reading: Low Tech and High Tech Interactive Reading Methods," *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*: Vol. 34: Iss. 1, Article 4. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/lls/vol34/iss1/4>

[Read Full Article](#)

Play is essential to the healthy growth and development of children. As children play, they explore new roles, try out new ideas, and bond with each other. Play increases language, cognitive, and social skills. Read the article to learn how play can be used to support learning and how teachers can use play in the classroom to improve reading and language skills

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

[Upcoming Newsletter Topics](#)

August: Other Health Impairment

September: Assistive Technology

October: Learning Disabilities

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](mailto:WI.FACETS@wifacets.org).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



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