



## Helping Children Understand Language

ITERS-R Indicator	Why is this important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff talk to the children frequently (as part of almost every interaction with children) throughout the day during both routines (greeting/departing, feeding, diapering/toileting, and naps) and play outdoors and indoors with all materials and activities offered to the children to use and enjoy).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since so many very young children attend child care settings for the majority of their waking hours, staff members share this important adult responsibility for helping infants and toddlers learn to understand language.</li> <li>• Talking to children frequently throughout the day during routines and play helps them understand language.</li> <li>• If staff conversations take precedence over talking to the children, children's understanding and use of language suffer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Room is reasonably quiet so children can hear language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When room is reasonably quiet it allows children to hear what the staff and other children are saying. The noise level should be low enough to allow conversations to happen in a normal tone of voice almost all of the time.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff (any adult who works directly with the children) usually talk to children in a neutral or pleasant tone of voice.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No long periods of silence by any staff.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Content of talk is generally encouraging and positive (75% of the time) rather than discouraging and negative.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Praises for accomplishments.</li> <li>○ Encouragement.</li> <li>○ Acceptance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A positive tone of voice conveys feelings of acceptance, warmth, pleasure and enthusiasm. A negative tone of voice conveys feelings of annoyance, disapproval, anger and threat.</li> <li>• Young children respond to the tone of voice as much as they do to the content or subject of the talk.</li> <li>• Frequent use of a harsh tone of voice or negative comments can interfere with language development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff talk is meaningful to children.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Talk about things the children are feeling, doing, or experiencing.</li> <li>○ Uses simple sentences children can understand.</li> <li>○ Uses gestures to add meaning to words.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk that is meaningful to children helps children link words to their experiences. When staff add words to the immediate experience of a young child, the connection becomes clear between the specific word and the specific experience. The words associated with commonly recurring experiences are understood long before the child can say them.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff used a wide range of simple exact words in communicating with children.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Names many descriptive words for objects and actions.</li> <li>○ Uses descriptive words.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When staff use a wide range of simple exact words (descriptive words) in talking about daily activities and common objects in the environment, children expand their understanding of spoken language and also increase their information about the world around them.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal communication is personalized.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Makes eye contact with child.</li> <li>○ Uses child's name.</li> <li>○ Talks to child in child's primary language.</li> <li>○ Uses signing or alternative communication when needed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When verbal communication is personalized, it is made clear to the child that the communication is directed to him or her.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff take part in verbal play with children.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Repeat infant's sounds (back-an-forth communication).</li> <li>○ Rhyme words in a playful way.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back-and-forth communication with infants encourages children to produce sounds and to listen to those produced by others, and also to enjoy the give and take of conversation.</li> <li>• When older infants and toddlers learn words, they enjoy hearing nursery rhymes, sequences of rhyming words, simple songs, and made up chants or songs with their names in them. They also enjoy songs about recurring daily experiences, such as washing their hands, building a tower with blocks, climbing up on the climber, or swinging back and forth on the swing outside.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff talk about many different topics with the children.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Talk about feelings.</li> <li>○ Express child's intentions with words in addition to naming objects and actions.</li> <li>○ Events past, present, future</li> <li>○ Point out and talk about positive or pro-social feeling and intentions as well as anti-social feelings.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wider range of topics staff talk about, the greater the opportunity for children to learn more words and concepts.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)*

