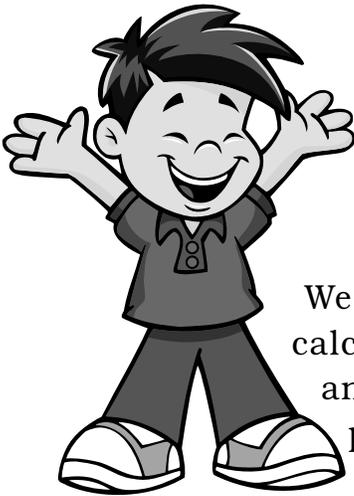


Life is Full of Language!

by

Robyn A. Merkel-Piccini M.A., CCC-SLP



Language is a very large part of life. We need it to think, process information, read, calculate, problem solve, and to learn. Children and adults are often tested for language proficiency via national standardized measure (e.g. The California Achievement Test.)



Think of a child's school day. First, they must prepare for school. This involves sequencing, organization, and timing. All of which are language based thought processes. Once they get to school, they are asked to reflect on ideas, socialize, solve mathematical computations, read a story aloud to the class, play a game, and perhaps write a story. These tasks involve: vocabulary knowledge, word meaning, phonics, grammar, sentence formulation, pragmatics memory, and self expression. Once again these are language based tasks.

Even with high national standards and efforts to promote literacy the links to language are often lost in educational settings. Children with language difficulties are often viewed as “under achievers;” even though, they may be suffering from a language disorder. Language is a part of history, science, math, and reading. A child with processing difficulties, or a poor vocabulary will certainly have difficulties in all areas.

Language disorders often coincide with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Learning Disabilities. A child now has an even greater challenge in learning and retaining information in these cases. They will need multisensory cues, organizational strategies, and review in order to progress.

There are many ways to make your classroom “language friendly.” Here are just a few suggestions:

- Create bulletin boards that reinforce your current learning themes.
- Have the children keep a “vocabulary journal” in which they write a few new words they learn each day.
- Engage the children in structured group conversations such as: “Let’s discuss what happened during recess today.” Monitor turn-taking, grammatical usage, etc.
- Have the children draw representations of spoken language. For example, describe a character in a book and allow the child to “draw” the person. Does it match the description?
- Pre-select vocabulary words to define and associate before units are learned.
- Play language based games, such as “Outburst.” Note those students who have difficulties with language when it is not within a very structured setting.

