

# THE CITY SPEAKS

A PARENT NEWSLETTER BY DISTRICT 75 SPEECH-LANGUAGE PROVIDERS

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

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Summer is officially here! Keeping children engaged and learning during the hot summer days can sometimes be a challenge. In this issue, we will provide you with some summertime tips to support the development of play skills and to help promote language and communication at home. Chapter 683, the District 75 summer school program, provides students with a continuation of specialized instructional programs and related services, including speech-language therapy. This year Chapter 683 will begin July 6, 2009 and will end on August 14, 2009. Find out who your child's speech therapist is for the summer--it may or may not be the same therapist from the previous school year. Your child's speech therapist can provide you with additional communication supports relevant to summer.

The Parent and Language Committee would like to wish you a safe and happy summer!

## Play Skills and Language Development

In typically developing children, play and language are highly associated and often develop in conjunction with one another. For example, one-year olds are usually aware that hidden objects still exist, and may communicate this by pointing or showing/giving the object to another person. Later, a two year old may combine two actions with an object (i.e., feeding a doll with a spoon from a plate) and may combine two words "baby eat." Ultimately, language ends up helping play. When children pretend "pirates" or "school," it allows them to sequence actions, narrate stories and direct the actions of others. While it is well known that children love to play, it doesn't always *just happen*. It is our goal to support our students by providing them with multiple play opportunities, adaptations and models that will facilitate play. This issue is dedicated to helping you help your child to play and to engage in the social interactions that are a part of most play experiences. Speak to your child's speech therapist about his/her play skills & language level. Ask your speech therapist for specific strategies to support your child's development. Remember, play is children's work! It is how they learn about their world.

## The Effect of Disabilities on Play Skills

Disabilities can affect how a child plays, the kinds of play he/she will engage in, and even the ability of a child to use play as a means for learning and generalizing new skills. While children's individual play skills are also affected by gender, previous experience and individual personality, children with disabilities often have distinct differences in their play. Our students often need to be *taught* play skills before they can begin to learn through play. (Mary Owen Ed., 1998 <http://www.pediatricservices.com/parents/pc-28.htm>) Since play provides children with wonderful opportunities for language-learning, problem solving, as well as developing social and other life skills, it is important to be aware of strategies that can support children's play development. Students with physical, cognitive or communication disabilities often need support to get materials or to learn how to ask another child to play. Careful observation of a child's interactions with objects and people will give a better idea of how a particular disability may be affecting his/her play. Listed below are the ways in which we can describe the developmental progression of play, along with some strategies.

## How Can Parents/Caregivers Support the Development of Play Skills?

Development of Play:	Types of Play with objects/toys:	Types of Social Play:
Simple to complex	Sensory-motor play	Solitary play
Self to other	Exploratory play	Parallel play
Concrete to abstract	Representational play	On-looker play
	Replica (theme) play	Associative play (common focus)
	Coordinated symbolic play	Cooperative play (common goal play)

Two of the most important types of play to encourage in young children are *replica play* and *coordinated symbolic play*.

**Replica Play:** This theme-based play occurs when children recreate familiar situations with toys (toy school bus filled with people) and allows children to develop a sense of sequence and narrative for both language and literacy development. **Strategies:** provide realistic toys/objects related to real-life experiences: house, shopping cart, school bus. Organize props (i.e. plastic food, plates) so they can be easily incorporated into play. Use language that assists in maintaining focus on the play, without expecting a response: "The plane is flying high." "The Children are going on the bus." "The baby is sleepy"

**Coordinated Symbolic Play** is when children pretend that one object represents something else (i.e. pretends to use a block as a telephone). This type of play is difficult to directly teach however adults can model pretend when the real objects are in view (i.e. pretend to drink from an imaginary cup right after pouring juice into a real cup).

Some strategies to support **Social Play** are: encourage children to play in close proximity to one another by using furniture to create smaller spaces. You may also want to look for toys that support proximity (closeness) such as a water/sand table, farm, or a dollhouse. In addition, provide access to similar types of toys to encourage parallel play (playing alongside a peer but not necessarily with them).

*It should be noted that for students on the autism spectrum, the leap from sensory-motor and exploratory play to representational play often requires more direct teaching and modeling. In addition, students on the autism spectrum may have a difficult time with social play. There are many strategies to support representational & social play development, one of which is*

*video modeling (refer to our Spring 2009 edition). Video modeling is a technique where specific play skills (or any skills) are video taped and viewed by the child. Scripts are simple and children can watch the skill over and over again. They can then practice these skills in real situations with their peers.*

Dear CITY SPEAKS,

My son is 9 years old and likes to be on his computer in his room by himself. His siblings want to play with him, but he does not seem interested in them or what they are doing. I try to play with him too. He'll sit and watch for a few moments, and then go do his own thing. How can I help bring everyone together to have some fun?

Signed,  
"No one to play with"

Dear "No one to play with",

Many children with developmental delays need to be taught how to play. It is not something that is naturally learned when they are younger. Siblings can be good role models for each other as well as motivators. The keys to success are patience and repetition.

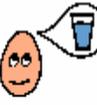
Find something that can involve your son in simple turn-taking activity, such as throwing a ball, pushing cars back and forth, playing a board game, building with blocks, or playing cards. Ask him to give you specific items, 'the red lego', the "big horse". Tell him what he needs to do, throw the ball, pick up the card, push the button. You will probably have to play with him and his siblings as well as prompt him verbally and maybe with hand over hand actions as to when it is his turn and what to do. Do the actions with him, not for him. Praise him for doing a good job as he successfully completes his turn. The more often that you all play together, the easier it will become each time you play in the future. Your other children will be able to interact with your son and will begin to model what you say and do. Your son will build his self-esteem and improve his skills.

Although, it may be hard to engage your son, only play for short periods of time in the beginning, and as his interest increases, so will the amount of time he will play for. Talk to your speech therapist about using a first-then board, or use a timer so that there is a definitive beginning and end to the activity.

Don't forget, try to make this experience fun.

Good luck!

## Communication Board: Park

hello 	It's hot 	Let's go outside 
My name is _ 	I'm thirsty 	park 
What's your name? 	ice cream 	sprinkler 



## Joke Time

Jokes are a fun way to practice language skills. Jokes provide a script for children with limited language as well as opportunities to interact with their peers, practice figurative language, develop vocabulary & support language processing, retention and recall skills.

For non-speaking individuals, voice output communication devices can be programmed with jokes.



Q. What did the pig say on a summer's day?

A. I'm bacon. (Baking)



Q. Where do rabbits eat breakfast?

A. At IHOP



Knock-knock.

Who's there?

Howard.

Howard who?

"Howard" you like a bite of my sandwich!



## Let's Play

Now that the weather is nice, it is a great time to go to the park, the playground, the zoo, and the beach. Doing activities together and talking about them is a great way to build language skills and social skills, as well as having fun.

Don't Break the Ice, Dominos, Ned's Head, Zingo, Guess Where, Guess Who, and Uno are all games that do are appropriate for children who are non-readers. These games work on simple turn-taking skills, identification and labeling skills, and matching of objects, colors, numbers, and/or pictures. 'Guess Who' and 'Guess' Where address asking and answering yes/no questions, and identifying different attributes of people and places. Don't be afraid to make up your own rules to fit your child's abilities.

## Resources to Support the Development of Play Skills

The New Language of Toys: Teaching Communication Skills to Children with Special Needs, A Guide for Parents and Teachers, by Dr Sue Schwartz, Ph.D.

Model Me Kids® Videos [www.modelmekids.com](http://www.modelmekids.com)

## SUMMER TIME

Chapter 683 for D75 programs begins July 6<sup>th</sup> and ends August 14<sup>th</sup>. There are also a variety of summer camps available for children with special needs after summer school ends as well.

**Contact your school's parent coordinator &/or guidance counselor for more information on local camps.**

To find additional listings refer to:

**Resources for Children with Special Needs**  
[www.resourcesnycdatabase.org](http://www.resourcesnycdatabase.org) (212)-677-4650.

If you have any questions or topics that you would like us to address, please send

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