



Research Supporting Strong Oral Language and Vocabulary as Major Predictors of Reading, Literacy, and Academic Achievement

Compiled: September 2011 by: Sherri Vernelson, M.Ed., LSL Cert. AVEd® & Kathryn Wilson, M.A., CCC-SLP, LSL Cert. AVT®, updated: 6/18/12

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Several highly experienced professionals working with children with hearing loss and significant oral language and vocabulary delays have documented the need for increased, direct instructional time, i.e. one hour daily for every year of language/vocabulary delay (e.g. 3 year delay = 3 hours of direct instruction in oral language and vocabulary). The following, in combination, supports this recommendation.

From: *Oral Language Learning: the primary years* (Munro, 2009)

- “Oral language is the foundation of learning to read and write.” (Roskos *et al.*, 2009, p. 1)
- “One’s use of oral language enables them to learn in all areas, not just literacy.” (Munro, 2009). If a child has a strong grasp of language skills, they are able to question, converse, investigate, initiate and link meanings in all areas. **Throughout a child’s school life, these skills are necessary in order to function effectively and achieve to an acceptable standard.**
- “The development of oral language is crucial to a child’s literacy development, including listening, speaking, reading and writing.” (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005, p. 3).
- Listening, speaking, reading and writing are all necessary skills to obtain and those children, who arrive at school with a wide range of language experiences, will already have a strong knowledge of how language works and how effective talking is (Roskos *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, **it is important that children who have difficulty with language are identified at school early on so that they are given the opportunity to catch up to others and further their work in all areas.**
- Schools have to be aware of the language needs children have and address these by integrating language development into all areas of the school day. It is essential that teachers “set clear learning goals for children and deliberately engage them in activities that help them to explore language and develop the language skills they need,” according to Roskos, Tabors and Lenhart (2009, p.4).

From: *Annual Growth for All Students, Catch-up Growth for Those Who Are Behind*, based on the Kennewick School District program to get 90-95% of their students to reach state standards in reading. (Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007). The following list is not exhaustive (there are 93 maxims), but highlights those that relate to **the need for increased direct instructional time for students who are behind.**

Maxim 21: Students who are behind need to make catch-up growth. Catch-up growth is annual growth plus some additional part of a year’s growth.

Maxim 22: The primary burden of catching up the student shifts from the parent to the public school system when the student enters Kindergarten.

Maxim 32: What works: instructional leadership, superb teaching, and excellent testing which assures annual growth and the four-phase TAG loop which assures catch-up growth: **(1) diagnostic testing to identify sub-skill deficiencies, (2) proportional increases in direct instructional time, (3) teaching to the deficient sub-skill, and (4) retesting to be sure the skill has been learned.**

Maxim 46: Students learn more quickly with direct instruction than they do with seatwork, entry tasks, homework and other teaching techniques involving non-eyeball-to-eyeball teaching or practice time.

Maxim 60: Catch-up growth is rarely achieved by pressuring students who are behind to “run faster” in the same amount of time. **Catch-up growth is typically achieved by allowing them to “run longer” and “run smarter”, i.e., dramatically increasing direct instructional time and using it wisely.**

Maxim 62: **Increases in instructional time should be proportional to the level of deficiency. Students who are three years behind need more minutes of direct instruction than students who are one year behind.**



Maxim 65: Students who are three years behind at the end of kindergarten may require 160-220 minutes of direct reading instructional time each day during first, second, and third grades to catch up by third grade.

- This maxim can be applied to oral language and vocabulary skills as reading is dependent on those skills.

Maxim 81: Directing instruction to the deficient sub-skill is fundamentally different than re-teaching the morning's lesson. Many Spanish-speaking children use these patterns when learning to speak English

Additional Research

- "Language skills need to be within the range exhibited by other members of the class into which the child is mainstreamed". (Maxon, 1992).
- "The goal is not to place cochlear implant children in regular classrooms at all costs but to choose that environment because the child has the skills to succeed there while expanding their cognitive and linguistic repertoire...Unless the language levels of deaf children are within 1 or 2 years of the levels of those in the regular class in which they are placed, they are virtually cut off from the entire verbal input process that is basic to educational experiences". (Robbins, 2009, p. 298).
- A study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, done on 100 profoundly deaf 16 and 17 year olds, enrolled in oral and mainstream high school programs in the US and Canada demonstrated that the primary predictor of achievement is English language competence. (Geers, A. & Moog, J., 1989)
- "The child whose language and vocabulary are severely delayed is not exhibiting reading readiness. Because one must know and be able to use the language that is to be read, the best way to work with such a child is to concentrate on her or his acquisition of language and vocabulary." (Robertson, 2000, p. 121)
- "To bring a child to grade-level language comprehension means, at a minimum, that the child must acquire and use grade-level vocabulary plus some post grade-level vocabulary. Obviously, this does not mean simply memorizing more words, but rather coming to understand and use the words used by average children at that level". (Biemiller, n.d.)

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