

## Synopsis of Video Program **Talking and Books**

Length: 20 minutes

By Kevin Cole and Mary Maddox

“Talking, language, words and sentences... We use them everyday.” The narrator begins with this simple message about the importance of language. This broadcast quality video program shows parents and teachers how to support early language and literacy development. The program teaches adults evidence-based strategies to use while looking at picture books with young children ages birth to five.

Narrator Linda Kennedy begins by reminding us that we begin learning to talk the moment we are born and we learn language by listening and talking to our parents, our siblings and other adults. Over video examples of children and adults looking at picture books together, the narrator points out how important parents are in teaching children to use language. And that paying attention to early language development will help prepare children for reading, writing and school. There are many ways parents can support language development during everyday interactions.

The program then illustrates the overarching goal of following the child’s lead. “You use what your child is interested in to encourage her to talk.” Video of adults “following the lead” of young children, are shown while the narrator highlights the important features of each interaction.

After demonstrating ways to follow a child’s lead, the narrator teaches viewers how to use three evidence-based strategies for facilitating early language development during while looking at picture books.

The following is a summary of the three strategies and key instructional points illustrated with video and narration.

**Comment and Wait.** Describing the pictures in the books, then pausing to allow time for a response, is an effective way to elicit language. Children need time to think and code their thoughts into language, so it is important for adults to give children at least 5 seconds to respond after they make a comment or ask a question. A longer wait-time also lets the child know the adult is interested in what the child has to say.

**Ask Questions and Wait.** Adults use two major types of questions to encourage children to talk or respond: open-ended and closed questions. Closed questions are those questions that require a yes-no answer, a pointing response, or a one- or two-word label. Asking a child "What do you see?", "Can you point to the cat?" or "What color is the alligator?" are examples of closed questions. Remember to wait.

**Open-ended questions** generally require a more complex response and may require additional "thinking time" on the part of the child to formulate their response. Open-ended questions tend to elicit full sentences or even several sentences. "What is the chicken doing?", "What's going to happen next?", or "Why did the girl need a new bicycle?" are examples of open-ended questions. Remember to wait.

**Respond by adding a little more.** Expanding what a child says helps build language. The adult repeats what the child says and then expands the utterance with one or two new words. This allows the child to hear the next level of difficulty. For example,

if the child says "ball", the adult says "ball, big ball." This reinforces the child's talking, gives her the support for the next level of complexity and provides new information.

The program then presents an easy way to remember the three strategies: C-A-R. C is for Comment. A is for Ask Questions. And R is for Respond by adding a little more.

The program concludes by encouraging parents to go home, have fun with their child and practice using the CAR strategies. Catalogues, magazines, even cereal boxes and signs can be used in addition to picture books.

#### Addendum

Synopsis for **Talking and Books** in Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Filipino, and Korean  
By: Kevin Cole, Mary Maddox, and Young Sook Lim

These versions of **Talking and Books** feature native speakers of each language and are designed to support families who are English Language Learners. These versions are similar to the English version of **Talking and Books** with the following exceptions:

**Importance of learning the language spoken at home.** At the beginning of the program the narrator points out that young children usually benefit when they learn to speak the language spoken at home. The program also encourages parents to "use the language you know best" with their young children.

**Repeat again in Spanish, Korean, etc.** "Repeat again in the home language" is a strategy for families who speak a language other than English at home. Children who are learning two languages simultaneously frequently mix the two languages. The "Repeat again in the home language" strategy encourages parents to repeat mixed phrases entirely in the heritage language. For example, if a child says, "Yo veo el shark." the parent or teacher would repeat the phrase entirely in Spanish: "Yo veo el tiburón." Repeating the phrase in Spanish helps build the child's vocabulary and language skills.