

## OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES and STRATEGIES

*“The child must know that he is a miracle, that since the beginning of the world there hasn't been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like him”*  
~Pablo Casals~

Each child navigates their way through the journey of learning to communicate; to share their ideas, emotions and experiences with others. Some move along with ease and others need guidance and support. As adults, we are in the unique position of helping children to speak clearly for sharing their ideas and playing with friends, understanding information for participating in classroom activities, and learning from the adventures that life brings to them.

CHALLENGE	DESCRIPTION	QUICK TIPS
<b>Speaking Clearly</b>	The child incorrectly says speech sounds, leaves out parts of words, or struggles to talk in an organized and clear manner. He or she is difficult to understand or feels frustrated with trying to help others interpret what he or she is trying to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a gentle, clear model.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hear the message, not the manner.</li> </ul> Child: “A TAT!” Adult: “Yes, a <u>C</u> AT. You see a <u>C</u> AT!”
<b>Expressing Information</b>	<p>The child uses limited vocabulary and experiences difficulty with labelling objects (i.e. crayons), actions (i.e. colouring) and concepts (i.e. sizes, colours, shapes, position, describing words). He or she tends to use vague terms such as “this” or “there”.</p> <p>It is hard for the child to organize and share ideas to explain, describe, or retell an experience or story. The child’s utterances may be unusually short or long; but contain few relevant details. Likewise, he or she may struggle to demonstrate proper grammar (i.e. plurals, verbs, pronouns...) and sentence structure, as further explained below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a gentle, clear model.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Say what the child would say if he or she could. Give choices, too.</li> </ul> Child: “Him goed home” Adult: “He went home!” Child: “cat please” Adult: “Do you want a YELLOW or BLUE cat?... Ok, you want a BLUE CAT!” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals, pointing or demonstrations to give meaning to the words.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reiterate the point of what the child is trying to say.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Say, Tell me more about _____. Then sum up the ‘story’ in a concise way so the child can start to learn the structure of sharing an idea.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk out loud about how you feel or what you are doing.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be routine and repetitive with your comments and directions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pre-tell</u> the steps (FIRST we will colour, NEXT we will cut, LAST we will glue...)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Tell</u> the steps (FIRST we are colouring, NEXT we are cutting, LAST we are gluing)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Re-tell</u> the steps (FIRST we coloured, NEXT we cut, LAST we glued...)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Word Structure (Grammar)</b></p>	<p>The child struggles to change parts of words to change their meaning. Examples of how words change:</p> <p><b>Plurals</b> – Regular: CAT vs. CATS</p> <p><b>Plurals</b> – Irregular: one fish vs. two fish</p> <p><b>Verb Tenses</b> – Regular: will jump, jump<u>ing</u>, jump<u>ed</u></p> <p><b>Verb Tenses</b> – Irregular: will eat, eat<u>ing</u>, ate</p> <p><b>Pronouns</b> such as HE/HIM for male and SHE/HER for female references</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a gentle, clear model.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Say what the child would say if he or she could.</li> </ul> <p>Child: “Him runs” pointing to a girl Adult: “She IS running! She IS running fast!”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use the pre-tell, tell, and re-tell model</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Repetition and routine: purposely teach key skills during the day; everyday; everyway!</li> </ul> <p>i.e.) Adult to child putting on shoes: “one SHOE - two SHOES!”</p>
<p><b>Sentence Structure</b></p>	<p>The child struggles build a sentence by organizing words in the proper order or by including all the words to create a complete sentence. Consequently, the sentence may have words that are spoken in the wrong order, the sentence may seem short, or the sentence might lack all the necessary words, including the small words such as IS and ARE.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a gentle, clear model.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Say what the child would say if he or she could.</li> </ul> <p>Child: “I happy” Adult: “I AM happy, too”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use the pre-tell, tell, and re-tell model</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals or pointing to show that there are many parts of the sentence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Repetition and routine: purposely teach key skills during the day; everyday; everyway! Starter sentences are helpful.</li> </ul>

		<p>Art time:  <u>I like</u> red apples.  <u>I like</u> blue flowers.  <u>I like</u> yellow bumblebees!  I like _____</p>
<p><b>Requesting Information</b></p>	<p>The child struggles to ask questions, request clarification, or indicate the need for help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a model and ask questions!</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specifically incorporate question-asking tasks into class routines. Focus on one at a time: where, when, who, what, why, yes/no. Put the child into the experience. WHERE is your shoe? WHERE is your hat? WHERE is your smile? WHO has blue? WHO has yellow? WHEN do we play on the swing? WHEN do we eat our lunch?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give the child the words to say:</li> </ul> <p>“Ask me, IS IT LUNCH TIME?”          “If you need help, say “HELP ME PLEASE” .          “Ask Taylor if you can borrow her pencil. Say, Can I ....?”</p>
<p><b>Understanding Spoken Information</b></p>	<p>The child does not appear to retain or accurately apply information that he or she hears. It is difficult for the child to pull out the main point or key information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Repeat the key points.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the child knows the vocabulary.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make the information relevant to the child’s life.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recall something familiar that belongs with this new knowledge.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help the child experience the information or go through the motions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use visual supports (pictures/objects) and demonstrations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help the child feel like the expert by playing silly (Does this ice-cream feel HOT?).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Say less information at a time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check for comprehension”</li> </ul> <p>“So the Little Red Hen said ( _ ? _ )”</p>

<b>Following Directions</b>	<p>The child misinterprets instructions or struggles to accurately complete a task.</p> <p>Think of all the interpretation that is necessary in this direction:</p> <p>“BEFORE you go outside, colour ALL the RED bears on the TOP row.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> FIRST-THEN: Give the direction in the order you want it to happen.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ONE STEP: Give one step at a time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PRE-TEACH and TOUCH: Help the child understand what the words in the direction mean. Use pointing and visuals. (i.e. all, red, top)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draw or show pictures of the steps so that the child can remind him or herself what to do next.</li> </ul>
<b>Answering Questions</b>	<p>The child tends to provide incomplete or inaccurate responses when asked a question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a relaxed, pleased, and interested expression.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Restate the question in a less complex or more relevant way.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specifically incorporate question-asking tasks into class routines. Focus on one at time: where, when, who, what, why, yes/no. Put the child into the routine experience. <u>WHERE is your shoe?</u> WHERE is your hat? WHERE is your smile?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give the answer first. “Your shoe is on your foot. Where is your shoe?”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a model. State the answers the way you would like him or her to eventually do. i.e.) If he points to his foot, you could say “ON YOUR FOOT! “</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fill in the blank: Model the answer, then ask again with a smile so he or she can try filling in the blank: ON YOUR FOOT! WHERE IS YOUR SHOE? IT IS _____...</li> </ul>
<b>Fluency</b>	<p>Also known as stuttering or bumps, the child repeats sounds; parts of words; and words. He or she might prolong a sound or completely ‘block’ the air and make no sound while trying to talk. The child may be starting to show awareness of this challenge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Show NO awareness or reaction, such as concern; frustration, or shock.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is okay to occasionally acknowledge that a word might have been hard. “That is a big word – sometimes it is a bumpy word for me too!!” Normalize it. It is not something to hide.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a relaxed, patient, and interested expression and tone. Let the child know how much you enjoy his or her ideas.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid speaking quickly. Avoid using long, complex sentences. Children tend to imitate adult speech, which can overwhelm their talking system.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On bumpy days, avoid asking tough questions or requesting a lot of verbal information. Find other ways for participation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CLASS RULES: No teasing allowed. Enforce turn taking rules to reduce potential interruptions and rushing of ideas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not make suggestions, such as ‘slow down’ or ‘try again’.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ultimate goal: With or without the bumps, the child will be a confident communicator! You will hear the message, not the manner!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Voice and Resonance</b></p>	<p>The child’s voice may sound harsh or breathy in the absence of illness. Likewise, it may seem like the child has a plugged nose or that air and sound is escaping through the nose during speech.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor for temporary illness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write down your observations for parents and recommend a visit to the doctor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A referral to an ear-nose-throat (ENT) doctor is typically warranted</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Communication (verbal)</b></p>	<p>The child may not use greetings or engage properly in conversation with others; but seems capable of using speech and language. His or her contributions to conversation may seem off topic. Likewise, this child may have difficulty starting, adding to, clarifying and ending topics of conversation. This may be impacting peer relationships and classroom participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specifically teach social skills to the entire class. Besides enforcing positive social interactions, training peer buddies will increase the number of positive examples for the child.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate social skills into daily routines. i.e. The same types of behaviours and words happen at arrival, departure, and turn taking time. The kids know how to access help and how to share ideas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use non-verbal games. For example, turn taking with a game or ball helps to teach the relevance of turn taking during conversation. Everyone has something to share. When you get the ball, it is your turn to give it back. Announce the beginning and end of the game. Count how many turns you had.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Model, guide, and re-direct:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on what is relevant to the child, talk ahead of time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

about what will happen at recess and what the child will do to join the fun. Give him or her words to say.

- Make a social story that talks about an activity and his or her proper involvement in it.
- Help him be his or her own advocate. If the child is constantly telling you what he or she should be telling other children, tell the child how and what to say to the peer. In the beginning, you may have to be the child's voice or model what you want to see.
- Help other children be perceptive to their peer's needs or situation. "Do you need help?" "Do you want a turn?"

**Early Literacy**

Early literacy skills help children learn that reading and writing are exciting, effective, and useful skills to have. Language development and experiences in their world all contribute to literacy skills. Consider the following abilities:

- Book handling skills (right side up, turn pages)
- Letters, words, and sentences start at the left side of the page
- "Read" pictures & visual props to understand: centres, schedules, directions & activities
- 'Write' stories by drawing a picture about an experience. Make a class book!
- Live stories through story-time, make believe props, and play!

- Treasure Hunt:** "We're going on a treasure hunt – going to find a BUH sound...BUH BUH BUH BUH!" (Look for objects such as ball, book, banana....but not telephone!)
- Syllable Hop:** Set out clouds or lily pads along a path. Create an adventure, like a game board. Make it across the sky to the ice cream palace or across the pond! In the mystery bag, each child will find a picture or object. Hop along with the # of syllables.
- Help Farmer Fran:** The animals escaped. The kids have to put the "P" animals and the "K" animals back into their proper pens. i.e. pig and puppy go together ; cow and cat go together in their pen.
- Magic words:** What happens when you mix BUTTER and FLY?
- Rhyme Time:** Pick one ending, such as AT. Bring along the sound friends (such as m, b, k, s, and r). Take turns with AT. Make a story!