

No: P53
Title: Developing programs to assist a Classroom Assistant's support with speech and language acquisition
Author: Elaine Pace, Furze Infants

Background

My name is Elaine Pace and I have worked at the Furze Infants School for the past fifteen years. I started as a mum helper for the first year and then after attending many courses trained as a Specialist Classroom Assistant NVQ3. In 2005 I and another member of staff attended a course for Speech and Language which we both passed. So we became the schools link personnel for the Joint Professional Development Team (JPD) for Speech and Language. Unfortunately the other member left the school, which meant I was now the sole link person.

Objectives

My duties as the link person are to work with children who have Speech and Language problems. I assess children that teachers have concerns about and pass on my results and observations to the team. Also to attend termly Cohort link meetings which keeps me up to date with new protocol and tracks the schools Speech and Language development plan and targets. I also work with my team leader when she comes in to formally assess any of the children I have passed on my concerns about or reassess children to see what progression they have made and set new programmes for them. As such I have assessed children from the Nursery up to and including Year 2 who have or are suspected of having problems with their Speech and Language. These problems can range from immature speech patterns and English as a second language (ESL), to moderate to severe Speech and Language problems.

Whilst working with small language groups each week I became increasingly aware of the neglect of the other children who deserved my attention. TIME had become a major difficulty; I have one afternoon per week to fit in over twenty children. What about the children I can't see? What if any of the children or myself are off sick and we miss a session? Most importantly why should they be limited to one session a week? These questions kept repeating themselves.

That's when I realised that we had a readily available resource in the school that could hopefully assist me with my problem, that being the IT equipment. If I could get some programs set up to cover some of the simple speech problem areas, children could then access these on a daily basis giving them the support they need until I could fit them into a group session.

A meeting was arranged for me to meet Tim from Barking College where we discussed the type of programs I would like. The first one I wanted would cover prepositions; I suggested the possibility of a duck moving around a bridge, on the bridge, behind the bridge etc. The second one would cover blends, this time I suggested a snake doing different actions, snake skate, snake swing etc. Then finally I wanted a program that would cover comprehension using a boy or girl figure highlighting different parts of the body. Most important was that each of the programs needed to have sounds, as well as movement and be fun and easy to use. Tim went away with my suggestions and with his colleague Jo came up with three wonderful and very workable programs. Once I had viewed them I realised that there was potential to build on them. At this point I asked if I could have a simple and advanced version of the comprehension body parts programme and the blend programme, which they happily amended for me. The advanced

blend program allows the child to work towards building full sentences, the snake is swinging, the snake is skating etc and the body parts program allows them to access more body areas as they progress forward with their comprehension and moving on to their expression.

Evaluation.

Since having the programs built, I was allowed to speak to the teachers at their Monday evening inset meeting, where I introduced them and explained the reason behind having them made. Also I discussed the availability of the programs on the computers so the children can have access to them at anytime.

I work with two groups of four children each week. The first group consist of Reception children; the second group has two children from Year 1 and two from Year2.

I had observed that some of the children were looking to other members of their group for answers and support and while this initially is fine, I needed to see how they were progressing on an individual basis too, so over the weeks I introduced them to the programs. Two of the children work on the computer, which releases me to work on Speech and Language programmes with the remaining two. They have been using them for a while now and the response has been very encouraging. I have seen a positive improvement with both their comprehension and expression. They are motivated to concentrate and become focused without distraction. They are able to access the programs on their class computer on a daily basis, which allows them to support and reinforce the work they have covered with me independently.

The blend program has been particularly successful with one of the second group who especially has a problem in this area. Having the ability to use this in our weekly sessions and eventually to be able to practise on a daily basis the work that we cover in the weekly sessions has and will continue to raise her self esteem and confidence. There has been a positive reaction from her class teacher who commented on her increased interaction both in and out of the class environment.

The preposition and body part programs are being used with a child on a daily basis to support his needs, and because they are colourful and fun he really loves to use them.

Here are just some of the children's comments on the programs.

"You learn to do sentences".

"You learn what parts of your body is called".

"Learn how to do proper spellings".

"It's fun".

"I like the snake because he looks and is funny".

"I like the duck because its shows you where to move"

"I liked it when the snake stared".

"You have to listen carefully to the words to see if you are correct".

"We learn how the sounds are".

Here is the response from Mrs M Munday-Key Stage One Co-ordinator.

I observed Mrs Pace introducing the Speech and Language CD. The children were all engaged and enthusiastic. They have been revising phonemes and working on blends this year and were all eager to read the words and put them in the correct order. Most of the children were able to complete the advanced level and I was very pleased to observe them pointing out grammatical concepts. The program also includes lexical fields and prepositions which will reinforce the children's understanding of the work we cover in the Foundation Stage and Year One.

The programs are interactive and the children will be able to work in pairs or small groups using the 'Active Slate'. The children were able to evaluate the programs which were very informative, both about the programs and about how they see themselves as learners.

Forward Planning.

The ICT equipment is now allowing me to give support to more of the children with Speech and Language problems and in the future, to **all** of them. There has been such a positive response from the staff and children that I feel I can progress forward and the aim is to get other programs developed by the Barking College team.

I also plan to catalogue all the resources that I use and produce a library system, which teachers can access anytime they need equipment to assist a child in class. They will be able to log resources in and out. This will allow me to keep track of who, what and where the resources are at any given time.