Each year, the Child Language Research Lab at Purdue offers a unique program for children with language delays. The Summer Fun program combines language research with speech-language therapy for eligible 4- and 5-year-olds, at no cost to parents. During Summer Fun, children participate in general preschool activities and a variety of fun and language-enriching experiences. Each child has individualized communication goals, which are addressed during daily half-hour therapy sessions, as well as in the classroom. Parents are provided with a written report and the opportunity to meet with clinical staff at the end of the program to discuss their child’s progress.

**Who can participate?** 4- to 5-year-old children with a significant delay in language development, but without hearing impairment or other developmental delays.

**When?** TWTh, 9-11:30 from 6/16/15 – 7/9/15

**Where?** Lyles-Porter Hall, in our new preschool facilities (see photo below).

**Contact:** Pat Deevy at (765) 496-1821; (800) 691-4700; or deevy@purdue.edu.

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**Language Links** is the Newsletter of the Child Language Research Projects in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at Purdue University. Through this publication, we keep in touch with families who have participated in our research, as well as people who have referred families to our programs.

We are grateful for the contributions that you have made to our research, and we hope that you find this newsletter interesting and informative!
Speech Development and Disorders

Speech development in young children proceeds slowly at first but the production of speech sounds rapidly becomes more and more accurate. While children make many speech errors at a young age, they achieve adult-like levels of speech accuracy at or before the age of 9. Some parents express concern about whether their child’s speech errors are typical for their age, and wonder when they will outgrow them. You should expect an unfamiliar adult to understand approximately 75% of what 3-year-old children say, 90-100% of what 4-year-olds say, and 100% of what 5-year-olds say, although their speech is not necessarily error-free. Children under the age of 3 years may drop the final sounds of words (such as saying bu for bus) or drop a syllable (such as saying nana for banana). By the age of 5 years, children are no longer expected to reduce consonant clusters (such as saying top for stop) or substitute earlier-developing sounds for later-developing sounds (such as saying tun for sun or do for go).

Children who mispronounce more sounds than other children of the same age present with a speech sound disorder. Approximately two-thirds of preschoolers with speech sound disorders also have language impairments, and are particularly at risk for later difficulties learning to read and write. Research findings from the Purdue University Summer Fun program have shown that children with specific language impairment are very likely to have difficulty acquiring speech sounds. Recently, the Purdue Stuttering Project found that 4- to 5-year-old children who stutter and had difficulty accurately producing consonants and novel sound sequences were more likely to continue to stutter than other children who stutter but who did not have these speech sound production difficulties.

The accurate and fluent production of speech is very complex and difficult, and it is no wonder it takes children quite a while before being accurate in their production of speech sounds! However, if you are concerned about your child’s speech development, you may contact a speech-language pathologist through your pediatrician or Purdue’s M.D. Steer Speech and Language Clinic (765-494-3789). Free public services are also available. If your child is under 3 years, contact First Steps of Indiana (765-420-1404). If your child is 3 years or older, contact Greater Lafayette Area Special Services (765-476-2900).

CBS Sunday Morning visits the SLHS Autism Programs

The CBS Sunday Morning news show recently visited the SLHS department to interview Dr. Oliver Wendt, who has pioneered the use of the iPad in language intervention for children with ASD. They also discussed Emily Studebaker’s social skills group for school-aged children with ASD. The SLHS department participates in the Purdue Autism Cluster, which brings together research and clinical faculty in partnership with community service providers. The Autism Cluster is dedicated to increasing our understanding of the causes and treatments of autism and to expanding resources for persons with ASD and their families in Indiana.
Phonological awareness, the understanding of how spoken language can be broken into smaller individual parts such as syllables and sounds, is very important for early reading success. There are several ways parents can help children tune into the sounds that make up spoken language and incorporate phonological awareness in daily activities. These activities can be done “on the go”, such as during car rides, bath time, or pushing the cart at the grocery store.

For example:

- Play word games with your child by pausing between parts of words. For instance, you can say “Snow and man. I wonder what they make together? Oh, snowman! That’s a man made of snow”.

- Play “I spy” and name things that begin with the same sound. If this activity is difficult for your child, provide two answers your child can choose from. For instance, if you are attempting to find objects in the house which start with the sound “b”, ask your child whether bed or door start with “b”.

- Practice blending sounds. You might say, “Oh! I think my mouth wants to talk very "slowly" this afternoon! Let’s see if you know what I am saying when I talk very slowly”. Then, say sounds of a word (e.g. duh + aww + g) and ask your child what you said.