



# LANGUAGE LINKS

NEWSLETTER OF PURDUE UNIVERSITY CHILD LANGUAGE RESEARCH PROJECTS

SPRING 2011

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## WELCOME

*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 strive to keep in touch with families who have participated in our research, as well as people who have referred families to our programs.

In this issue, you will find an article about the relationship between reading comprehension difficulties and earlier spoken language problems in children. In *Parent Tips*, we discuss ways of talking with children that help facilitate language development. Also read about the Stuttering Project's recent appearance on the CBS Sunday Morning show and find out about opportunities offered in upcoming 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!

Department of Speech,  
Language, and Hearing Sciences

[www.cla.purdue.edu/slhs](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/slhs)

## JOIN US FOR SUMMER FUN!

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. This

year, Summer Fun will begin on June 14 and end on July 7. The sessions are held during these four weeks on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

*The Summer Fun Program  
combines language research  
with speech-language therapy  
for eligible 4 and 5 year olds.*

During Summer Fun, children participate in general preschool activities and a variety of fun and

language-enriching experiences. They paint T-shirts, have a pretend camping trip, march in a 4th of July "parade", and sell lemonade at a stand. Each Summer Fun participant has individualized communication goals, which are addressed during daily half-hour therapy sessions, as well as in the classroom. Children may work on articulation, descriptive language, social communication, and school readiness skills. Parents are provided with progress summaries and reports of their children's test scores, and they have the opportunity to meet with clinical staff at the end of the program to discuss their child's progress.



*Summer Fun! continued on page 2*

SUMMER FUN PROGRAM  
(765) 496-1821 or (800) 691-4700

CHILD LANGUAGE RESEARCH LAB  
(765) 496-1821 or 496-2253

DEVELOPMENTAL SPEECH  
PRODUCTION LAB  
(765) 494-1669

PURDUE STUTTERING PROJECT  
(765) 496-6403 or (866) 360-0051

# READING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS MAY REFLECT EARLY LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

Reading experts usually describe two types of problems that underlie children's difficulties with reading. The first and most common type is seen when children have a tough time *reading individual words*. For example, when children with this type of problem are shown an unfamiliar word, they may struggle to sound it out (for example, s - u - n, "sun").

The second type of reading difficulty is seen when children can read individual words fairly well but have trouble *understanding the sentences or paragraphs* they have read. This type of reading difficulty is often described as a reading "comprehension" problem. Children with this type of problem may have trouble understanding written instructions and classroom reading assignments.

In recent years, researchers have discovered that these children often have subtle problems in their understanding of spoken language as well. They may have difficulty understanding verbal requests or sentences with complex elements such as, "Before she jumped in the pool, the girl waved to her mother." For some of these children, vocabulary knowledge is also below age level, leading to

difficulty grasping new, key concepts.

We now know that these children's problems with spoken language did not develop suddenly during the school years. It appears that many children with reading comprehension difficulties showed mild spoken language weaknesses during the preschool years but, because their language difficulties were not severe, it was assumed that they would grow out of the problem. Unfortunately, the spoken language weaknesses of many of these children persist, and have a negative effect on the children's ability to understand the sentences and paragraphs that they are asked to read.

When a child shows difficulty with reading comprehension, parents and teachers can request that the child's spoken language abilities be assessed by a speech-language pathologist. The child may need extra help in both spoken language and reading.



It is easy to see how spoken language difficulties could negatively impact a child's learning and classroom performance. While a child might not show obvious language comprehension problems in casual conversation, in the classroom he is required to understand more complex language, such as following multi-step directions, learning higher level vocabulary words, and following fast-paced classroom discussions about written materials such as textbooks, worksheets, and storybooks.

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*Summer Fun! continued from page 1*

**Eligibility** - To be eligible to participate in the Summer Fun program, children must be between 4 and 5 years of age by June 1st and demonstrate a significant delay in language development without accompanying medical problems, hearing impairment or other developmental delays. Testing to determine eligibility will take place this spring. Families are reimbursed \$9 per session for eligibility testing, and the program is provided at no cost to families. If you would like more information about this program, please contact Pat Deevy at (765) 496-1821; (800) 691-4700; or [deevy@purdue.edu](mailto:deevy@purdue.edu). Children can be scheduled for eligibility testing starting now and continuing through early April.

## Purdue Stuttering Project Featured On CBS Sunday Morning Show

The Purdue Stuttering Project was featured on the *CBS Sunday Morning* news show on January 30, 2011. Dr. Anne Smith and Dr. Christine Weber-Fox discussed their research into the causes of stuttering and their findings on physiological aspects of the disorder, including speech motor control and how the brain processes sounds and language. The goal of their current project is to determine if the results of these tests can help predict which 4 and 5 year olds who are stuttering are likely to persist, and which are likely to recover from stuttering. Also featured on the broadcast were the screenwriter for the film *The King's Speech*; a New York city based speech-language pathologist who treats people who stutter; and several adolescents talking about their stuttering. The story can be viewed by clicking the *Sunday Morning* link at [www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com).

# PARENT TIPS: TALKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

While there is normal variation in language development, children usually say their first words around their first birthday. By their second birthday, most children have at least 50 words in their vocabulary and are often combining words into short phrases such as *bye bye mommy*. Since talking is primarily a social activity, parents can encourage their child's language skills by:

- Talking about the things your child is interested in and looking at
- Being on the same level as your child so you can be face to face (for example, on the couch or on the floor)
- Using daily activities such as eating, dressing, and bath time as opportunities to talk, laugh, play, and develop routines with your child
- Reading books with your child to introduce new words and establish a fun, special time for the two of you

While there is no need to demand speech from your child, parents can repeat and expand on their child's sentences. For example, if your child says *Doggie!* you can expand on this by commenting *Yes, a big doggie!* Or if your child says *Her fall,*

you can expand on this by saying *Oh, she fell down*. Being highly responsive to all of your child's communication attempts (including sounds, eye gaze, pointing, and speech) is an excellent strategy for facilitating language development.



## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

### LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

#### STUDY 1

- 42 – 47 month old **BOYS** (3 ½ - 4 yrs. old) needed for 5 sessions (1 hour each)

#### STUDY 2

- 30 – 36 month old **children** (2 ½ - 3 yrs. old) needed for 10 sessions (30-40 min. each)

**You will receive \$9 per session, plus a free speech, language, and hearing screening.**

*\*children must be native speakers of English\**

For more information, please contact Pat Deevy at (765)-496-1821 or [deevy@purdue.edu](mailto:deevy@purdue.edu)

### LANGUAGE AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

- **Children aged 4 yrs. old (48-60 months)**
- **Children will receive a toy and parents will be paid \$10 for each session.**
- **Children will also receive a free speech, language, and hearing evaluation.**

For more information, please contact Lisa Goffman at (765)494-1669 or [goffman@purdue.edu](mailto:goffman@purdue.edu).

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