



Talk with your keiki

Building a rich vocabulary through language acquisition

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All parents want their keiki to develop the skills they will need to be successful in school and in life. One of the most important skills that children need to succeed in school is being able to communicate with other people. Parents and other primary care providers can help their keiki acquire this vital skill by talking to them everyday. By talking to your keiki everyday you help your child build his or her vocabulary.

Language acquisition begins at birth. Long before your baby is able to make sounds to form words, you are teaching him or her how to speak. When you tell your child, "Look at that big, brown dog. I wonder what he's doing?" you are providing your child with a rich language and vocabulary lesson. Your child notices how

your lips make different shapes to make different sounds and how these sounds can be strung together to make the word "brown" or "dog." By asking your child a question she or he notices that you are stopping to wait for a response. This will give your child the opportunity to babble an answer, and even though it is not a "real word" your child is learning that what he or she has to say is important to the people who love them.

Toddlers and preschoolers are old enough to share with you their thoughts and engage in conversations. Talking to your keiki everyday can be as simple as telling them something you saw on your lunch break, then asking them what they did outside with his or her friends in school or at childcare. This provides the entire family with an opportunity to check-in with each other, and you with a chance to interject a language lesson without your child's knowledge.

Reading to your child everyday provides you with another opportunity to teach him or her new words and strengthen his or her language skills. When reading to your keiki talk to him or her about the illustrations. Let your keiki talk about what he or she sees. As you read, ask you keiki to predict what will happen next. When reading a book with rhyming text, read the first line and see if he or she can complete the next. When you read to your keiki everyday you not only learn about what interests them, you provide them with an opportunity to learn new words and improve their communication skills.

Hearing your voice everyday, whether it be talking, singing, or reading, will help your keiki acquire the language skills and vocabulary they will need to be successful in school.