

Experiences That Support Development and Learning: Real to Reel: Everyday Talk

[Music]

Dave Wilson: Can I have a sip?

Lennox: No.

Dave: Why not?

Lennox: Uh-huh.

Sabrina Register: Sharing a snack...

Dave: We share.

Sabrina: And some conversation with dad.

Lennox: Daddy cold?

Dave: Daddy cut the orange.

Lennox: Daddy cold?

Dave: I'm not cold.

Lennox: Daddy cold!

Dave: I am cold. My hands are cold.

Sabrina: Typical? Not in the Wilson house a few months ago. Their conversations were pretty one-sided.

Dave: Lennox, when she was two, 2 1/2, was pointing, would mumble, or would get very excited, be like — [Mumble] and you couldn't understand anything. She could say "mommy," "daddy" or "dada" and kind of her brothers' names, Jet and Sully. But only we could understand what they were.

Dave: Cheers.

Sabrina: So Lenny's family began to seek help for her language delays. Through research, they found out about Enhanced Milieu Training, also known as Everyday Talk, developed by Dr. Ann Kaiser at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development.

Dr. Ann Kaiser: And what I think has become the more pervasive model for us comes out of developmental parent-child interaction...

Dave: Say "Throw away, daddy."

Lennox: Throw away, daddy.

Dave: All right. Daddy throws it away.

Dr. Kaiser: And really is about how the dyad works as a unit and how parent responsiveness to what children are saying and doing sets the occasion for modeling language that's relevant to the child's interest and focus of attention.

Lennox: Happy birthday.

Dave: Happy birthday. Thank you.

Sabrina: Dave and Lennox, her family calls her Lenny, immersed themselves in Everyday Talk for about three months. Half of the sessions held at the clinic at Vanderbilt, the other half, at home with coach Suzanne Thrower.

Suzanne Thrower: Say "door on."

Lennox: Door on.

Suzanne: Put the door on the house.

Sabrina: Dave admits that at first, he was hopeful about Everyday Talk but a little skeptical.

Dave: I went in thinking, this is not — how can this work? It's playtime. I play all the time with her. But the strategies that were taught and taught in a way that they made sense.

Suzanne: Orange key or blue key?

Lennox: Blue key.

Suzanne: The first thing we usually teach parents is noticing and responding to all child communication and playing at their level. So kind of playing at what they like to do, so starting with their interests and kind of building upon that, and responding every time they communicate.

Dave: We roll.

Lennox: We roll.

Dave: We roll the Play-doh.

Suzanne: And the mirroring and mapping is also something that we teach, which is for when kids aren't communicating a whole lot. So they're playing, but they're being really quiet, but they're doing some actions, like they're putting the blocks in or they're driving the car. And so parents can join in on that interaction by doing the same thing that they're doing and giving them

the word for it. So the kid drives the car, the parent drives the car right next to him and says, "drive the car." So the kid is getting a really kind of obvious cue for what word goes with the action that they're doing. Cat in. Close the door.

Sabrina: Strategies Suzanne teaches Dave and other parents include target talk.

Suzanne: Lock.

Sabrina: That is responding with one or two specific words that are at the child's level.

Dave: Make a giraffe or make a cat?

Lennox: Cat.

Sabrina: There's also play, adding more actions or activities with a toy to expose the child to more words.

Dave: Say "make a cat."

Lennox: Make a cat.

Dave: Good girl.

Sabrina: Then there are expansions or adding a word onto what the child is already saying, thereby building her sentence structure.

Suzanne: The last two things are what we call time-delay strategies and prompting. The time-delay strategies are setting up opportunities for the kid to request.

Dave: Want to turn the page? Say "turn the page, daddy."

Lennox: Turn the page.

Suzanne: And the prompting is when we're actually telling the kid what to say. So you can set it up the same way that Dave had done today.

Dave: Say "cut the orange again."

Lennox: Again.

Dave: Cut the orange again.

Lennox: Orange again.

Dave: Cut the orange again.

Dr. Kaiser: You probably know from reading the literature that there are lots and lots of good instructional strategies that will give you short-term immediate changes in child behavior. We do them all the time. But there aren't very many that we know over the long haul generalize and maintain and serve as kind of a foundational support for learning the next skill. So from our very first studies, this has been a continuing theme in our research, which is here's our primary effect. We know that we can teach teachers or teach parents to do talk strategies and kids' language will improve. But kids' language will also improve across the day in the classroom and at home with their parents, not while we're doing the instruction. And that's really the goal. The goal is to get generalized, maintained outcomes for kids. So that's been our driving interest is, can we make the intervention better so we get better, broader, longer-term effects? And the answer to that is, yeah, we can.

Sabrina: In addition to Lennox, Suzanne works with 3 1/2-year-old Julian on communicating verbally. Julian is about halfway through the roughly three-month intervention.

Julian: It's a house.

Suzanne: It's a orange house.

Julian: It's a orange house.

Suzanne: It's a orange house for the bunny.

Julian: [Sniffs]

Suzanne: Bunny says sniff, sniff, sniff.

Sabrina: Suzanne works with Julian on Everyday Talk strategies as Julian's mom, Sarah, observes.

Sarah Kurtz: Before he started the program, he — I mean, he's always been a very happy, passive kid and — but we never — we were always stuck in baby world. Like we never knew what he wanted. It was a constant guessing game and a one-sided conversation all the time of what he wanted, what he needed.

Suzanne: Ooh, they climb.

Julian: Oh, no.

Suzanne: Oh, no, they fall.

Sabrina: But several weeks into the program and Sarah says she's already noticing a big difference.

Sarah: Last week, he told me for the very first time that he was hungry. And to hear that from our three-year-old who's never said anything like that ever, it's pretty amazing. And just to hear him vocalize what he wants is — there really aren't words for it as a parent.

Sarah: I cut.

Julian: I cut.

Sarah: I cut the Play-doh.

Suzanne: Great.

Julian: I cut the Play-doh.

Sabrina: Like Lennox's family, Julian's family incorporates Everyday Talk strategies into their daily routine, whether it's playtime, bath time or lunchtime.

Sarah: You want triangles?

Julian: I want four triangles.

Sarah: I want four triangles.

Julian: I want four triangles.

Sarah: Four fingers.

Julian: Four fingers.

Dr. Kaiser: The families that are really successful is not predicted by age or what their parent does or income or any of those things. It really has to do with whether the parent's willing to practice at home.

Suzanne: I've always known that involving parents was important. But I just really have learned after doing this parent training and doing this intervention how important it is.

Dawson Goddard: First, we're going to read a...

Child: Book.

Dawson: Then we're going to sing a...

Child: Song.

Dawson: Then we're going to wash...

Child: Hands, make stuff and eat it.

Dawson: And eat it. Good job.

Sabrina: The success stories don't just happen at home. With Everyday Talk, they happen in the classroom too.

Dawson: Sophia, where's your spider? Haven't got it. [singing] The really fast spider went up the water spout, down came the rain and washed the spider out, out came the sun and dried up all the rain, and the really fast spider went up the spout again.

Dawson: Whoo. Are you kind of tired?

Sabrina: Dawson Goddard is the lead teacher in the two- and three-year-old class at the all-inclusive Susan Gray School on Vanderbilt's campus. She says unlike some strategies, Everyday Talk is practical.

Dawson: They're very easy to use in the classroom. Sometimes they teach us these really elaborate — or tell us about these really elaborate strategies, and they sound great. And then you go to implement them, and it's just too much. It's too many steps. It's too many whatever when you have all the kids. And so these just, to me, were very simple and very easy.

Dr. Kaiser: So what we're always trying to do with teachers, two things. One is to get teachers to have more of those two-, three-minute interactions with kids that are really dyadic, and they can teach language in those, and that are personal and connected and social because that's what little kids need. And then to teach teachers to work with kids individually in the context of small groups.

Dawson: We put the cracker on top. We put the legs. We spread more chocolate, and we made our...what is it?

Child: Spider.

Dawson: Spider. We made our spiders.

Sabrina: Three-year-old Sophia, who has a cochlear implant, benefits from the simple hands-on strategies that Dawson incorporates throughout the learning day.

Dr. Kaiser: She's working with one child, but there are four, five kids there, and she's talking to everybody. And she's using those same strategies. She's responding, and she's modeling, and she's following through and commenting to kids. But she's really targeting this one little girl and teaching very specific language with that child.

Sophia: Thank you.

Dawson: Thank you, Evan.

Sabrina: Strategies that have yielded big results.

Dawson: Sophia, when she started the school year with me, had one — had about — I mean, maybe 5 to 10 words, I want to say, that she used over and over and over again. And now, as you can see, she's using two- to three-word sentences and stuff. So she's come very, very far.

Dawson: Sophia, you're good?

Sophia: Yes.

Dawson: Yes.

Dawson: Another child started the year only speaking Chinese and now is pretty fluent in English, and I used a lot of these strategies with him as well. And, you know, they all work like, you know, I said earlier, they just work across the board with all different types of situations.

Child: Meow.

Dawson: The cat said meow. And the spider didn't answer because she was... Child: Too busy.

Dawson: Too...

Sophia: Busy.

Dawson: Busy.

Sabrina: The Everyday Talk approach is also showing great promise with children with Down Syndrome and children with autism.

Dawson: I've worked a lot with kids with Down Syndrome. And usually at this age, kids with Down Syndrome are either complete nonverbal or emerging, you know, a few words or a few sounds. And kids with autism — and again, that range right there is huge. You can have some kids who are using a lot of words and some kids who are nonverbal.

Dr. Kaiser: Our toughest kids, and love them the most, are the slightly older kids who have autism and a long history of not talking. So these are minimally verbal four- to seven-, eight-year-olds who haven't — for the most part, haven't learned the social foundation, the joint attention, sharing affect, sharing engagement with toys, haven't learned that piece. So we've adapted kid talk to include teaching joint attention because that's what's foundational to beginning to get spoken language with these kids. And so we don't get the kind of accelerated change in spoken language that we get with our toddlers, but we still make marked and generalized progress with those kids.

Lennox: Put the door on.

Suzanne: You want me to put the door on. That was four words.

Sabrina: Back at the Wilson home, Suzanne finishes Lenny's follow-up visit and reflects on her progress.

Suzanne: Few keys in. Some concepts like adding the "s" to the end of words for plurals, I noticed she was doing today, and pronouns, so she's using I and my instead of, you know, I guess five months ago, it was "Lenny." "Lenny turn. Lenny turn," you know? Now, it's "I want to cut." And so she's using the pronoun and the verb and the phrase. So big difference today.

Sabrina: What's she like now compared to before the program?

Dave: Now, it's amazing. Within eight months, she can — she went from no words or a basic word to three, four words in a row, "mommy, can I have...a grape," which is, we never thought that would happen.

Lennox: Kitty.

Dave: Kitty cat. And destroy the kitty cat. Okay. Hold on, hold on.

Sabrina: But it has happened, for Lenny...

Julian: Big animal.

Sarah: In the red barn.

Sabrina: For Julian...

Sophia: Water off.

Dawson: Water off.

Sabrina: And for other children with speech delays, simple strategies that are producing life-changing results.

[Music]