

SNACK TIME TALK

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The opportunities for talking with each other at the snack table are endless. At Childhaven Nursery School, snack time is a really important part of our daily routine. We have a lovely old table with small wooden chairs all around. The adult sits at the table with the children at all times. We have props, fresh flowers or photographs on the table to spark interest and encourage communication with the children.

We use small cups and saucers made from pottery in many different designs that we have gathered from parents and charity shops. Even our very young children use the ceramics, we teach them to how to handle them independently and care for them properly.



TEACHING AND MODELLING LANGUAGE INVOLVES INTENTIONALLY USING LANGUAGE TO SHOW HOW WORDS ARE USED TOGETHER TO FORM SENTENCES AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO APPLY IT IN THEIR OWN SPEECH.

EEF EVIDENCE STORE

These relaxed encounters around the snack table provide fantastic opportunities to teach and model language. Through talking about the snack or the props on the table, we are able to use key practices to support communication and language. For example, the practice of explaining and showing can be applied when describing the snacks and drinks on offer, or talking to children about the simple process of buttering toast, or pouring water.

While always using correct language with the children, the adult can talk about what they have been doing that day. This use of story during snack time can support children to connect the meaning of words within and across sentences (receptive language). Story (recounts of true events or imagined) provides a useful context for practising these language skills.

WHAT'S ON THE TABLE?

For our snack at Childhaven we like to offer a variety of options. In the morning, we always offer some form of breakfast such as toast, crumpets, pancakes or bread, alongside a plate of mixed fruit. In the afternoon, we offer crackers, breadsticks, fruit and vegetables. There is always an option of milk and water to drink. We encourage the children to be independent and make their own choices and pour out their own drink.

Once the children have washed their hands, they collect a plate and cup from the trolley, sit down and decide what they would like to eat and drink.

The snack plate has some food already on but the children are invited to help cut the snack with child friendly knives. The children can eat some themselves and place some ready for their friends to choose.



WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Evidence Store details approaches for supporting communication and language development.

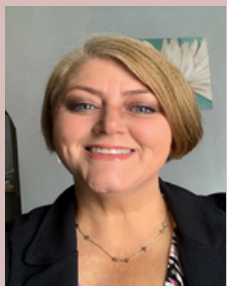
There is strong evidence that the EEF approach to teaching and modelling language can be effective for all children, including evidence of effectiveness in interventions focused on children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, there is currently no evidence that this results in narrowing the disadvantage gap when all children receive the same intervention.

Practices that may be effective can be either verbal or physical, and the EEF evidence suggests that combining both kinds has the most impact. Verbal strategies include asking open questions about stories, prompting children to sequence stories, retelling stories, giving children corrective feedback, eliciting imitation, and relating stories to children's own experience. Physical strategies include story acting and using props and pictures.

The overall evidence behind teaching and modelling language through stories is strong, but individual practices are less well-evidenced. While studies often consider teaching and modelling language through story, there is also evidence to suggest that the same practices can be effective in contexts beyond stories, for example, to support the teaching of vocabulary or social skills.

You can read more about approaches to Communication and Language on the EEF Evidence Store website, here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language?approach=teaching-modelling-language>



THANK YOU FOR READING.

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