

# SPEECH-LANGUAGE LINKS

ISSUE 2

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*A Newsletter for Resource Teachers of the Deaf in the  
Central and Southern Regions of New Zealand*

## Kia ora team!

August already – I can hardly believe it! I know you will all be getting literacy assessments done, and AAT information in, so I thought a nice light newsletter about lots of cool websites was in order.

## In this issue:

- Websites on toys and activities for preschoolers
- Q & A's about working with preschoolers – Evette's thoughts
- "Brain games for babies, toddlers & twos" book
- Fun websites for primary school students that I came across mostly by accident!



## Websites about preschoolers:

A number of you have mentioned that having preschoolers on your caseloads again has taken a bit of getting your head around. A great website to get information about the different skills that children are likely to be developing, and the toys / activities that they will be interested in at each age level is: [www.kidzgrow.com](http://www.kidzgrow.com)



There is some great information under the 'Toys and Baby' section, and also under 'Child Development' (see orange box at top left). The 'Child Development' section is divided into 3 main sections: Baby development (3-18 months),

Toddler development (19-36 months), and Child development (37-70 months).



Click on an age level, and it will take you to a page of 2 different activities that focus on main milestones for that age group. It gives a short blurb about what the child is learning to do, steps they will make towards that, and ideas to help facilitate the learning. The activities focus on gross motor development, language and communication, cognitive and social development. It will give you great ideas if you are struggling with where to start!

Another good website is the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They have a page dedicated to 'Object books': <http://www.tsbvi.edu/Education/vmi/objectbook.htm> These books are designed for children with a visual impairment, but they can be used for our preschoolers too. They are essentially experience books, with texturally interesting objects glued in to the book, rather than just drawings or pictures. We know that preschoolers learn best when we let them explore using all of their senses. Experience books are a great way to get them listening to, and using, the same language numerous times.

## Questions and answers about working with preschoolers:

Questions that I've been asked relating to working with preschoolers include:

- Is it ok **not** to do any sit-at-a-table work?
- How do I get the preschooler to sit at the table?
- What activities should I do with the preschooler?
- What do I do when they just flit from different activities?

Also, there is concern among a number of RTDs that 'just following them around the preschool doesn't look like I'm doing any work'.

To answer these questions, we need to think about developmental stages. Most children would not choose to sit at a table to do anything much until they are around 3 - 4 years old. Also, if given a choice of a table-top activity and an activity involving more moving around, most children would prefer to be moving. This is in line with current brain research that suggests that **the three core elements involved in effective learning are movement, laughter, and singing**. Our challenge is to work out how to incorporate our goals into more 'active' activities! So, in my opinion, it is absolutely fine not to do any table-top activities in a session!



However, there are times when such activities work well – some kids enjoy them, noise levels may dictate that you need a quieter space to focus on

listening and language, the child may be working on building attention skills prior to school, etc.

In my experience, **if you want to teach a child to sit at a table who isn't used to doing so, start with very exciting activities (and quite a few)**. I would try:

- a small tub of water and some toys
- some toys they haven't seen before
- lots of wind-up or push-go toys
- anything they can throw (but not break anything with – e.g. velcro balls at a dart-board)
- and a bubble-maker for the end (take turns as the child will want to get up to pop the bubbles!)

Initially, you just want to get them to stay on the chair, and increase this time each session. If they want to sit on their knees, that's fine. Give them lots of praise throughout your session about how well they are sitting / working at the table.

What activities should you do with a preschooler?

Any! Try everything, and more than once! Remember: repetition of language around experiences, at a close distance, is your main strategy. **Always keep in mind: movement, laughter, singing, lots of repetition, meaningful experiences, and involving all the senses.**

When the child is active, moving from activity to activity, that is what you do too! You are providing them with the language for their experiences, thoughts and feelings – and you can only do that if you're right there with them!



**Play = child's work.** If you are concerned that other staff think you aren't "working", explain that your main job is to be like a radio commentator of the child's life, and to maximise listening opportunities as they arise. You still focus on goals (from your McShane, Stone and/or VADEC schedules), that you model and encourage the child to imitate.

**If your child is at a very early stage then lots of different imitation games will be important.** To initiate imitation from the child, first try imitating them! If s/he is banging on a drum, you bang on a drum too. If s/he pauses, you do your bit and then wait for them to start again. Keep copying and it quickly becomes a game. Soon you will be able to do something different in the game and the child will imitate you. You will always be using language as you do the activity (e.g. "bang-bang-bang") and so the child will also learn to imitate what they hear.



A great book for more ideas is **"Brain games for babies, toddlers and twos"** by Jackie Silberg. In this book you'll find activities to do with babies from birth through to 36 months, organised into 3-monthly sections. Each page has a short blurb about what the research tells us and how to do the activity.

### Websites for primary students:

Build your own alien at:

<http://pbskids.org/arthur/games/alien/alien.html>

Have fun making and describing your alien. Can your student name all of the different parts?

A fantastic site for all things related to science is: [www.sciencekids.co.nz](http://www.sciencekids.co.nz). Everything from

experiments, interactive games and activities, awesome images, to videos, is all right here. Definitely worth a good look!



Another interesting site containing heaps of free printable picture sets is:

[www.mes-english.com/flashcards.php](http://www.mes-english.com/flashcards.php)

Happy browsing everyone!

*Evette*

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