

May I Have a Word?

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Making Our Knowledge Base & Specialized Skills Accessible to Parents

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Have you ever pondered the fact that assuming a 12-hour day, the time school-age children normally spend with speech/language pathologists when seen in therapy twice each week equates to about 1.2% of their week?

What this figure says to me is that though our time and expertise are extremely important in the lives of the children we serve, we must consider that our influence is minimal in comparison to the influence of others such as teachers and parents who spend much more time with these children. I believe most of us would say we feel parent involvement in the intervention process is important, but how many of us actually demonstrate that by how we practically involve parents?

I guess one could say this is my biggest “kick” these days, showing with my actions that I believe parents are crucial team members who, with some practical training and guidance, are able to actively support my efforts in order to yield greater gains.

I would venture to guess that many of us have probably attempted some sort of parent education at some point, and we’ve likely met some opposition or experienced frustration in the process because of parents who appear uninvolved or detached from their child’s needs. As I have begun the process of actively pursuing parents to take part in the speech/language intervention of their children, I have found that many parents are willing but feel inadequate in their ability to help their children, or they don’t have the tools in order to walk it out, which is where SLPs come in.

With some effort and creativity, we can pass down language facilitation techniques and strategies that we use as professionals and as parents ourselves, techniques that are often second nature to us but often times not to many of the parents we are working with because of their backgrounds, experiences, or even culture.

The key is helping parents incorporate speech/language activities into their already established daily routines, and helping them take advantage of spontaneous play opportunities and manipulating that environment to purposefully target speech and language. It’s the idea of playing *on purpose*. The second important piece is providing this parent education not through complicated and lengthy written materials that are above their heads but through simple and easy-to-read materials as well as through training and modeling what language-rich purposeful play looks like.

Purposeful Ongoing Play (P.O.P.) is a term I coined to describe strategies to help parents enhance the speech/language skills of their children through spontaneous, purposeful play. Tip sheets written for parents, referred to as **P.O.P. Sheets**, are downloadable for FREE at www.thespeechstop.com under Parent’s Corner, Help with Language. A continuing education eCourse will also be available soon called *“Increasing Frequency & Intensity of Language Intervention Through Parent Training & Involvement.”*

“Knowledge Unshared Is Worthless.”

Author Unknown