

CHILD CARE

Clipboard

A newsletter for staff and parents of the Tulare County Office of Education Child Care Educational Program

Fairview teacher Elvia Guerrero uses lots of language even in math activities.

Many studies show that language and literacy skills in children's early years, along with early math skills, are the most important predictors of later school success.

Child Care staff know that using lots of language, more complex words and full sentences with children help brain development during the critical 0-5 years.

To find out how to accomplish this, we interviewed a preschool teacher, a toddler teacher, a home educator and a licensed family day care provider who are especially effective using language.

What we found is, it's just a matter of making sure staff and parents have lots of conversations with their children.



Reading, big words, full sentences are important

Teacher Elvia Guerrero has found a good way to encourage language in her classroom at the Fairview Center. She has children explain things to each other.

She calls the children "friends."

"If one of my friends tells me they don't know how to make something, I tell them to go ask a child who does know how to do it and see if he can help," said Elvia.

"I listened to how one child explained

the problem, using words and showing him. It was really neat to see that."

Elvia also tells the children to take home what they learn at school and teach their family.

"I suggest that parents have the child be their helper so they will talk."

She is always talking to children, always asking questions, whether it's during meeting time, transition or tooth-brushing.

Even doing math includes language,

such as explaining what measuring means or naming shapes.

She even heard that one child corrected her dentist, telling him, "It's not a circle; it's a sphere."

"Language never stops," said Elvia. "Use open ended questions. Put it on the child so they are talking. Ask how do they know something."

Scaffolding is important: building on what the child already knows. It she says

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Mother-daughter team loves helping families

Lizie Hernandez and her daughter, Fedila Olivares both started their Child Care careers working in center classrooms, but they have found their niche as home educators.

After 16 years at Cutler #1, Lizie moved to Home Based six months ago. It wasn't what she expected.

"I thought it would be easy," said Lizie, who quickly discovered the complexity of being a home educator. "I thought we taught the children. I was blown away when I first observed a home visit [and realized I was there to teach the parent how to work with her child]. It was hard to make that transition."

Fedila was able to give her some tips. She was in the classroom for three years before moving to Home Based three years ago. She has learned to step back and just guide the parents.

Their center experience is especially helpful when it comes to doing the twice-monthly socials, which are done in a classroom setting.

Mother and daughter agree on the impact a home educator can have on a family. Providing one-on-one time with a parent and child for an hour and a half each week creates a strong bond.

"It changes the whole family," said Fedila.

"You become a part of their family," said Lizie.

Fedila has seen the impact she has had on families. "Without me teaching the parent how to parent, she wouldn't have the relationship she has now with her child."

Both women talk about the helpful comraderie the home educators have, always sharing ideas and



Lizie Hernandez and her daughter Fedila Olivares have fun in the playhouse area of the Dinuba Home Based room for children's socials.

resources with each other. And Editha Carlos, Home Based supervisor, has found Lizie, with her recent center experience, to be a good trainer when it comes to writing DRDP notes and keeping observation logs.

Lizie was a single mom when she started taking child development classes and got a job with Head Start.

Fedila knew from a young age that she wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps. She was just 18 when she got a job as a T.A.

"Head Start helped me raise a wonderful daughter," said Lizie proudly.

"I have a loving, patient mother," said Fedila. "It was Head Start that showed her how to be an ideal mom."

Now they're paying it forward to other Head Start families.



Large book donation from Visalia store

Families will be reading lots of books this spring thanks to a donation from dd's Discount Store in Visalia. The store participated in a promotion by First Book. The store asked for donations from customers and added a donation of its own.

The total donation of \$2,805 was used to purchase 1,091 books from the First Book National Book Bank, a distribution system for donations of children's books from publishers to programs serving children in need.

Most of the books were put in the Home Based library for families to check out and read at home. Some of the books will go to centers.

Pictured are Maribel Velasquez and Kim Czaja from dd's, helping distribute books to Visalia Home Based children.

Administrator retires after 43 years of public service

After almost eight years as Child Care's administrator, Ray Chavez wanted to retire quietly in January, but co-workers couldn't let him go without honoring him at a luncheon at the Main Office.

Ray actually was finishing his third career in public service, encompassing a total of 43 years. He first became involved with Child Care back in 1969, just four years after the program began.

At the time he was working for the Welfare Department and overseeing the State Preschool Program, which was then run by his department.

Because of his job, he worked closely with Child Care, and then-director Senaida Garcia asked him if he would be the community representative on the Program Policy Council (PPC).

"I think I learned the program by being part of PPC," Ray said. "I felt like I knew Senaida and knew what she would like."

In 1993 Ray retired from the Welfare Department and went to work for the Employment Development Department.

Senaida had once asked him if he would apply for the social services coordinator job. What he was really interested in was working with parents.

After retiring from EDD, he got his chance in 1996 when John Ruelas retired as parent involvement coordinator.

Ray enjoyed that job immensely, but after only one year, Senaida asked him to fill in as the Home Based coordinator. That "temporary" job lasted until he was named administrator in 2004.

Asked about his accomplishments at Child Care, Ray said that all of them were a team effort. He mentioned transitioning Migrant Head Start, reorganization, increasing visibility for the program which helped achieve funding possibilities, and adding such programs as the CRADLE project based on dual language, Houghton-Mifflin curriculum, Kids Play Math and the Leadership for Learning Committee which emphasizes quality teaching. Other highlights were receiving the federal Early Learning



Ray Chavez poses with his administrative team at his retirement. Pictured are Adelia Martinez, program operations manager; Ray; Raul Angeles, fiscal manager; Lois Sheffield, contracts manager; and John Rodriguez, human resources manager.

Mentor Coach grant and training on the CLASS observation tool based on teacher-child relationships.

Reducing the program last year because of drastic state budget cuts made for hard decisions, but Ray said management based those decisions on some guiding principles that tried to preserve as many enrollment opportunities as possible and not to leave any commu-

nity without preschool services.

Ray has no special retirement plans, saying it will be "whatever God has planned for me!"

"Since early in life, things have just fallen into place. I can truly say my role has been to adapt to each new transplanting and bloom wherever I have been planted. I still feel I have much to offer."

Kudos to staff

John Rodriguez, Human Resources manager, was presented with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Classified Leader award for both county and regional levels. Next his name goes to the state competition.

He was nominated by Jim Vidak, Tulare County superintendent of schools.

Child Care received highly complementary comments and no significant findings in December when it went

through its **Child and Adult Care Food Program review**, which is done every three years.

The reviewer noted that the food program provided healthy food choices, good food experiences and positive interactions at meal times.

She was especially impressed that meals included lots of conversation as well as good literacy and math interactions.

Lisa Project

The Lisa Project, which dramatically shows the reality of child abuse, returns to Visalia during the month of April. It will be in the Sear's parking lot at Mooney and Caldwell on Thursdays and Fridays from 12-8, Saturdays 9-5 and Sundays 1-5.

Volunteers are needed to help with the exhibit. If you can help, contact Anna Ferreira at Tulare Youth Services Bureau, 686-9772, ext 201, or afferreira@tysb.org.

Hands on Heros

First 5 Tulare County is seeking nominations for its Hands-on-Heros awards for people working in child care. If you want to nominate someone, visit www.first5tc.org or call 622-8650.



Krystal Magdelano
N. Visalia #1

CHILD CARE Clipboard

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Reading, big words, full sentences are important

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this is green, expand it by saying this is a green folder.

The same concept works with infants and toddlers.

"We use language all the time," said Lucy Ceja, teacher at the Tulare Adult School Center (TAS), which serves only infants and toddlers.

"We're talking, reading, singing, using finger plays. We're constantly talking about what's happening, even when we're changing their diaper."

TAS works primarily with teen parents, who spend lab hours in the classroom.

When new lab students come in, the first thing they learn about is the importance of using words.

"I explain how important it is to talk—even pregnant moms to their tummy."

Children absorb everything they hear.

"When a child points to something, we say, 'What do you want?' We try to get her to say the words."

One child isn't talking in the classroom yet, but when she goes home, she talks about what she has learned in class. So the parent knows what she is hearing helps her learn.

In Home Based, the home educator's goal is to show the parent how to work with her child, and language is one of the most important parts.

"We're only in the home once a week," said Iris Sanchez, Ivanhoe home educator. "Without the parent involved, the child won't get to the level we want."

Iris begins with smaller words and moves to bigger words. She uses the pamphlet, "101 Words of Praise" and tries to have her parents use a new word with their child each week.

"I model the words," said Iris. "Then I see parents start using the words."

Iris says she must first build trust with the child and parent, letting them know she is there to have fun and to help the child learn. After awhile, their shyness goes away and they're eager to learn.

"Some parents are so shy. I make sure I get them involved. Then they start liking it." She can tell which parents work with their children during the week.

One child has been telling Iris detailed stories since she was 2.

"The mom is constantly working with her. I had the older daughter too. The mom always

says, 'Teach me, teacher, how to work with my daughter.'"

Iris understands the parent's hunger for knowledge. Iris was once in her position. Years ago she enrolled her two oldest children in a center, and her two youngest were in Home Based.

"I learned how to be a parent in this program," she said.

Parents sometimes think all they're doing is playing, but Iris explains how they're learning.

"If you put together a puzzle, the parent thinks it's just a puzzle. But I tell them they're matching colors, having to think, build, be patient. Every toy has its own teaching tool."

Karen Tiburcio works with all ages in her home day care in Dinuba. She is a licensed family day care provider who contracts with



Home educator Iris Sanchez (left) shows her parents how to work with their children.

Child Care's State Migrant Program. Many years ago, before starting her own business, she was the supervisor of the Orosi Center.

Karen sometimes gets out the dictionary when children come across a word they don't know.

"A lot of conversation comes out of reading," she said. For instance in the story "Three Little Kittens" the children didn't understand the phrase "soiled their mittens," so Karen had an opportunity for discussion.

They spend a lot of time reading. Sometimes Karen makes a song out of a book. And the children make their own books. On Fridays, she lets the children pick out a book to take home. It's the responsibility of the parent to read the book with their children.

Every Thursday, the children write in their journals. "They're excited about Thursday. They run and get their [journal] and sit down with me," she said.

Karen also gets the children involved in multi-part projects that encourage language. For instance, they learned about Chinese New Years.

"We learned about bamboo, and I brought in bamboo sticks. We got books on Chinese New Year and the zodiac signs. We made a dragon so the story came to life."

All the teachers agree, children are curious and want to learn about new things. It's up to teachers and parents to expand their words, expand their sentences and find activities to keep them engaged.



Lucy Ceja reads to 2-year-old Diego Jasso.



Home provider Karen Tiburcio has her children write in journals every Thursday.

Emma Chavez has worked everywhere in the program

Before retiring in December, Emma Chavez, Porterville Educational Complex (PEC) Center supervisor, had worked in just about every area of the program during her almost 33 years with Child Care.

She started as a parent, enrolling all six of her children at the original Cutler Center (which later burned down). Then she spent three semesters earning 60 units so she could apply for a teaching job.

She got the job as supervisor of the original Dinuba Center, although she really wanted to start as a teacher.

That center was eventually moved because of its hazardous location next to a gas company.

"We could never grow grass there," recalled Emma. "We kept reseeding, but it wouldn't come up."

Six years later, her husband was transferred to Indio, Calif. near Blythe, Arizona. But they only lasted six months because Emma couldn't take the weather.

"It was 120 degrees. You had to take your ice chest with you to go grocery shopping. And there were monsoons."

So Emma returned to Tulare and got a job teaching at the Woodville Center, which she loved.

Over the years she was assistant supervisor at Woodville, opened the Doyle Center and was the coordinator of the Head Start Migrant Program (FCCN) when it contracted with home providers. When Migrant changed to a center-based program, Emma opened the PEC Center.

But there were several other jobs along the way she didn't like so well. She tried Home Based for a few weeks, but got frustrated when the parents wouldn't keep their appointments.

She was the first latchkey teacher for kindergarteners at Woodville, but she had to work a split shift.

And she left one more time, when her husband was transferred again. But she always returned.



"I've had so many opportunities here," Emma said, adding that former director Senaida Garcia always took her back.

"I would give her vegetables from our center garden. At FCCN, I made her tamales. That was my way of thanking her for putting up with me."

In those days, Senaida directly supervised the center supervisors and would come out to do evaluations.

"The supervisors would panic [when she came]. I'd be prepared with a basket of vegetables," said Emma.

Now Emma and her husband are moving to Yuma, Arizona for two years to take care of their great granddaughter. Their granddaughter doesn't want to live alone while her husband is stationed in Afghanistan.

When they return, Emma and her husband will move to Visalia where their daughter has an empty house they can live in. They also plan to travel.

Emma wants time to play her piano and do her needlework. She also plans to teach her granddaughter to cook Mexican food.

"All she eats is salads."

Emma knows she will miss the children she has worked with all these years.

"I love this program. It's so meaningful for children and families. You can see the children bloom. They are totally different children when they leave our program."



Leah Valencia, N. Visalia #2
"A lion in a cave looking for a bear to eat."

Lynda Waddle looks back over long nursing career

Lynda Waddle has spent 51 years in the nursing profession, but some of her favorites were the last 17 years with Child Care.

She worked in hospitals, OB-GYN, clinics, home health and surgery in Tennessee, Hawaii and the South Valley.

Then Child Care nurse Marlene Overbeck told her about working with children at Child Care.

"I enjoy little kids, and I thought that would be a nice way to spend my last years in nursing," said Lynda, although it meant a substantial cut in pay.

She would still be working, but back problems forced her to retire in December.

At her retirement party, co-workers talked about how

Lynda likes to sing and use puppets with the children, and how she loves to dance. She is always learning something new.

Family health service worker Carmen Gonzalez worked with Lynda for 10 years.

"She was like a second mom to me," said Carmen. "We worked so well together. She always left me notes so I'd know where we were. We relied on each other."

Carmen also remembered the times they would transport children to Children's Hospital in Madera at 6 a.m.

"She'd pick me up at 5 a.m., pick up the family, be there all day for surgery."

She was never negative about families or situations.

Parents were grateful for the services she provided,



Lynda Waddle (right) receives a card from Lucinda Vasquez, Woodville supervisor.

especially when she found hospital care or dealt with rare diseases.

But most of the time she was simply able to have fun with the children.

She'll always remember the child that told her, "You sure do have a big butt!" That was

in her heavier days.

Susan Fabro, health coordinator, summed up Lynda's career.

"Lynda is a wonderful nurse. She has a wealth of knowledge. And she didn't let her health problems keep her from caring for children."

Rosie Huerta retires after 23 years in R&R Library

When Rosie Huerta began working for what was then called Resource & Referral, all the R&R Library toys were in boxes along the Main Office hallways.

R&R was in the process of moving from the little office at the front door (now used by ERS) to what is now the Health Office.

Rosie worked in the GAIN program, doing what Connections for Quality Care project specialists do now, helping welfare parents with their child care needs.

During her 23 years with the program, Rosie worked as a referral counselor, providing parents with lists of child care providers. More recently she was in charge of the R&R Library.

She watched the library grow over the

years, adding more toys, Ellison machines and laminators.

"When people from Office Depot or Lakeshore come in, they say we have the best library," said Rosie. "We have a lot of resources."

The library is used by a lot of staff as well as home providers.

"The day care providers are so happy they can change out their toys. The children they take care of think they're getting new toys."

Now that Rosie has retired, she will help take care of her 18-month-old granddaughter and help her husband with his new business.

"She has a blast with me," said Rosie, who is looking forward to having more time with her granddaughter.



In about four years, Rosie and her husband hope to turn the business over to their daughter. Then they are planning a long road trip to Alaska.

Using the 5 senses

Staff had a ball at the Science and the Five Senses workshop offered free by Fresno Pacific University at their Visalia campus.

One of their projects was making sound catchers out of cups. They learned how children can position the sound catchers to the front or back, up or down to see if they hear things differently.

Pictured with their finished project are (front) Virginia Gaspar, Dinuba #2 supervisor; Edith Carlos (Home Based supervisor), (standing) teacher Dianne Young and Cristina Espino, Cutler teacher.



Center holds food drive

The Seneida Garcia Center was a little late getting in their names for the holiday food basket giveaways, so parent Sereena Harris decided to start her own food drive by bringing in some food items. Staff and parents chipped in, and the center was able to give food baskets with frozen turkeys or hams to five of their families.

Pictured with some of the food is Troy Harris, son of Sereena.



Fire fighters play Santa

Since 1985 the firefighters in Woodlake have played Santa for the whole town, taking four or five evenings to escort Santa throughout the streets to give out stuffed animals and candy canes donated by the community.

Esther Mendez, Woodlake #1 T.A., has participated for the last 10 years. Her brother is a firefighter and her husband is a former firefighter. She organizes a group of girls to help the children up and down from Santa's sleigh.

"We get to see the kids' happy faces and also hear their sad stories," said Esther. "One year a girl just wanted a Christmas tree. The guys went out and got her a tree and presents."

