

ECAT Club Meetings March 2019

Gap Task:

Using the ECAT resources on SID, please discuss each of the Ten Top Tips for Talking in your teams, using the following prompts/questions:

- What does this tip look like in practice
- How do you do it with the children in your setting
- Where & When do you use this tip
- What is the impact on the children if this tip is used regularly & successfully
- What is the potential impact on the children if you don't use this tip as part of your everyday professional practice
- How could you share these tips with your families

Discussion Responses:

Top Tip 1 Get their attention

- Use a musical instrument to gain attention/use child's name/use visual prompts [signs/gestures/visual timetable]
- Be down at child's physical level; gain & maintain eye contact
- Use soft/quiet adult voice
- Tap child on shoulder
- Calm environment if possible

Top Tip 2 Vocabulary is key

- Adults to identify words for children to learn, then provide opportunities for repetition of words in a range of activities/contexts: stories/nursery rhymes/role play/label environmental sounds [200 times repetitions]
- Adults to provide indirect commentary as children engage in different activities [to include words previously identified if possible]
- Adult role is to FEED language to all children in context of a communication & language-rich learning environment at multiple times during the session
- Share new words in English learned in setting with EAL families, for them to reinforce new words in home language
- Use books/stories to identify new words for children to learn [appropriate level of language/words will be accessible & meaningful for children]
- Reinforce new words with signs/gestures

Top Tip 3 Build on what they Say

- Scaffold language at the right level for the child; early communication skills and language
- Use strategies such as extending/expanding by adding 1 or 2 words
- Use commentary during play or other activities: adult role is FEEDING language to children
- Take an interest in what children say & their interests
- Ensure all children have a turn to talk
- Adults to play alongside children & wait for child to invite adult 'in' to play & conversation

Top Tip 4 Talk about what children are interested in

- Provides motivation for child to share; depends on how secure child feels within relationship with specific adult
- Adults to promote conversation about child's interests by asking open questions
- Commentary by adults to provide new language & key language
- All about Me bags

Top Tip 5 Be Careful with Questions

- Reduce questions, replace with commentary where possible
- Replace closed questions with open questions as far as you can: 'I wonder what will happen if ...'
- Questions should have a purpose & not just be something adults use to open verbal interactions with children
- Many children can feel intimidated/overwhelmed if adults ask them lots of questions; can be a barrier to children communicating

Top Tip 6 Show them the right way

- Model right way if child says something the wrong way eg 'I **goed** to the park' ... 'oh so you **went** to the park' without correcting the child
- Respond positively to what the child says
- Model positive non-verbal communication all the time [maintain eye contact while waiting; nod & smile]
- Adults to scaffold/model next level of child's language development through commentary etc
- **Adults to be positive role models both with children & with other adults**

Top Tip 7 Make Language Learning Fun

- Children love 'silly' adults who make mistakes/do something 'wrong' with language
- Adults can approach any opportunity to play with words with an expectation of fun
- Make up non-real words/change familiar rhymes
- Many of the activities in Phase 1 Letters & Sounds are ideal for developing this Top Tip
- Preschool children do not get 'bored' by language activities ... it's all about the adult delivery

Top Tip 8 Give Children Time

- Adults to wait as long as possible for child to respond before 'jumping in' to help – aim for 7 seconds if you can!
- Some children have all the language skills they need to plan & produce sentences, they are just slower at doing it
- EAL children will certainly need adults to give them extra time when they are practising new spoken English skills
- Adults should be aware of their own interpersonal skills with colleagues when they model this
- Adults also to be aware of the importance of their non-verbal communication towards the children as they wait

Top Tip 9 Check out Understanding

- How will you know if a child hasn't understood what you've said/asked him to do?
- Check his response time/does he follow what other children do?
- Adults using too much language/words & sentences too complex for developmental stage of child
- Can child TELL/indicate non-verbally to you if he doesn't understand?
- Is adult giving instructions in chronological order?
- Are all adults using signing consistently?
- Is the environment sufficiently visual: signing/symbols/photos/visual timetables?

Top Tip 10 Have Conversations

- This is ultimately what all of the other Top Tips have been leading to ...
- Children who are at risk of delay for some or all of their language skills NEED to spend time with adults who know how to engage them in meaningful interactions at the right level for them to develop their skills [use the ECAT audit Positive Relationships]

Risks

- Communication & Language skills don't develop or develop very slowly meaning child remains At Risk of Delay potentially as he transitions into Year R
- Literacy skills can be put at risk if adults don't intervene to support communication & language in Early Years
- Negative impact on attachment & relationships
- Negative impact on social skills
- Setting has unsuccessful OFSTED grading due to poor quality of adult-child interactions

There are many other potential risks of not using the Ten Top Tips in Early Years ...

Monitoring Ten Top Tips

- Communication Checklists based on ECERs & ITERs: can be used for appraisal/review
- ECAT Top Tips for Talking for practitioners