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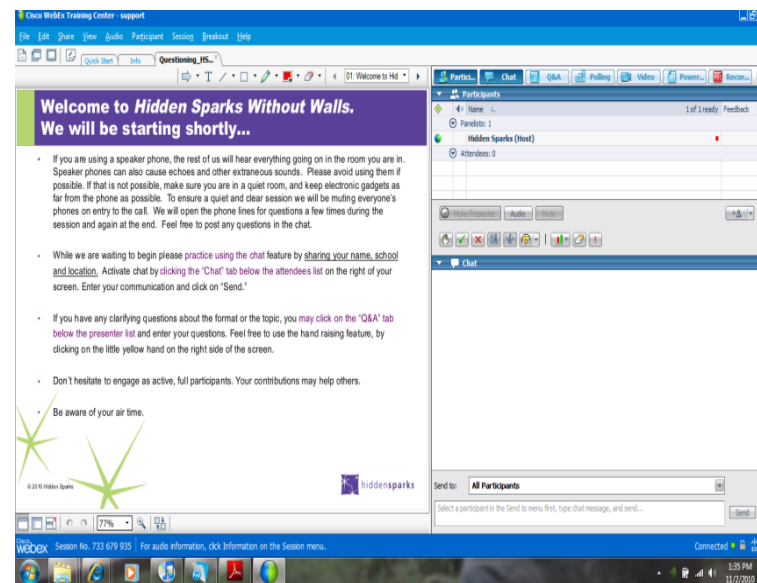
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ABOUT HIDDEN SPARKS

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks supports professional development for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for diverse learners.

Hidden Sparks' programs combine school-based professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, classroom observation and coaching. Our philosophy is that by helping teachers meet the needs of struggling students, ultimately *all* students will benefit.

Now in its 10th year, Hidden Sparks has trained **190 coaches** in **65 Jewish day schools** in New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Boca Raton, and Chicago, and 4 Israeli cities (Jerusalem, Modiin, Ramle, Ra'anana).



hiddensparks
without walls

Language and Learning: A Foundation for Success

With Claire Wurtzel

April 26, 2017



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helping children reach their potential™

Our Guest:



Claire Wurtzel, Co-Educational Director, was on the faculty of the American Museum of Natural History. Prior to that she was the Director of Faculty Development for the Churchill School and Center in New York, and the Director of Faculty Development for the New York City Schools Attuned initiative for All Kinds of Minds. She oversaw Schools Attuned courses, mentor training and facilitator training for over 400 NYC schools and ultimately adapted the Schools Attuned Program for Jewish Day Schools.

For 18 years Ms. Wurtzel was on the faculty of Bank Street College, and was Chair of the Department of Special Education. As Co-Educational Director for Hidden Sparks, Ms.Wurtzel provides training, supervision and mentoring to the Hidden Sparks teams of coaches.

Claire and her husband, Bill Wurtzel, recently co-authored two books, “Funny Food” and “Funny Food Made Easy”. They do workshops in schools to improve children’s eating habits by making it fun to learn about nutrition.



Goals of This Session



- To understand that language can be segmented in different ways
- To understand the significance of early language development
- To consider the impact of learning two or three languages
- To appreciate the role parents and teachers play in enhancing or diminishing children's language development.
- To share effective strategies to support children who have language challenges.

Overview of the Session

Language can be segmented in many ways.

In this webinar we will discuss:

1. *Receptive Language*
Oral & Written
2. *Expressive Language*
Oral & Written



Receptive and Expressive Language in the Classroom



Receptive Language

Receptive language is oral speech that we hear and process or written language that we read and understand.

Receptive language includes interpreting messages in dance, sign language, painting or music.

We use receptive language to:

- *Follow directions.*
- *Process verbal explanations and questions.*
- *Read and understand a passage.*
- *Interpret non-verbal language (dance, a cartoon, music).*



Expressive Language

Expressive language is used to convey ideas, thoughts, emotions and needs. We do this by speaking, writing, signing, using non-verbal body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and the visual arts.

Some activities that require expressive language:

- *Expressing an opinion orally, or in written form.*
- *Writing an explanation of how to solve a math problem.*
- *Reading a story aloud.*
- *Using vocabulary appropriately.*
- *Resolving conflicts.*
- *Making and keeping friends.*



Early Language Development

- Children's early language is the foundation for all language learning. Typically, one year olds understand much more than they can express. They may understand what is said or read to them but may only be able to answer with head shaking and pointing.

If we ask a one year old, "Do you want to go outside"? The child will probably run to get his shoes. That's a language test. He understands our words. He may gesture or shake his head but he is on his way to speaking.

- Expressive language develops gradually. At first, two words may convey a paragraph worth of ideas.

What's different about children who learn 2 languages simultaneously?



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Early Language Development

When our 10 month old granddaughter said, “No like” she was conveying a big idea: “I don’t want to go into the room because I’m afraid of the painting”.

I asked her, “Do you want me to take away the painting?”
She said “yes”, and I when I removed the painting, she walked into the room.

When I elaborated on what she said, she heard new words in context and I clarified for her and for me what she wanted to tell us.

What was she learning from our exchange?



The Impact of Early Experiences

A study in the 1960's explored ways to increase the meager vocabulary of children living in poverty. Tutors engaged the children in games and stories to build their vocabulary.

- The researchers learned that direct teaching of vocabulary words did increase kids' vocabulary. However, it did not accelerate the rate of growth beyond the words they taught directly. There was an increasing disparity between the poor children and those of the higher socio-economic status (SES) faculty children at the University of Kansas.

- Researchers wanted to understand the disparity. They studied interactions between the adults and children in 42 families of various SES- poor, working class and middle class. They followed the children from 7-9 months until the children turned 3 years old.



Encouraging vs. Discouraging Feedback

Researchers recorded everything they saw and heard on their monthly visits including: spontaneous speech, number of words spoken, the quality of the words and the number of times the children received encouraging versus discouraging feedback.

- The average child in the highest SES received 32 affirmations and 5 prohibitions per hour. In the lowest SES group- 5 affirmations and 11 prohibitions.
- By age of 4, the child-in the lowest SES received 84,000 more discouragements.

How might this impact the children?

- By age 3, children from the highest SES knew 45 million words, the children in the middle SES had 26 million, and lowest SES knew 13 million. There was a 30 million word gap.

What might account for this difference?

What can we take away from this study?

The Social and Emotional Impact of Language Struggles

Researchers learned that what the children in the study could do at age three was a strong predictor of their language skills at age nine-ten.

- The child who has a meager vocabulary may have trouble understanding or have a hard time finding the right words to say. This may inhibit the child from having conversations with a peer or an adult. Social interactions may create a lot of stress.
- As a result the child may avoid interactions and become invisible in the playground or at school. The child may miss out on developing friendships and thus on opportunities to practice and improve on social interactions.



Social Language

- Children struggling to understand or speak get frustrated and may act inappropriately. They may develop behavior problems because language helps us think through options before acting. They also may lack the words that deal with feelings.
- Fear may keep them from joining their peers. Many hang around adults who are kinder and more understanding. In school these kids may have a hard time in cooperative groups.
- They need to learn how to function in groups. We need to teach what we expect them to do in a group.

Examples:

1. One person speaks at a time
2. Listen to others
3. Accept all ideas

For some kids it's absolutely necessary to learn and practice the expectations for working in groups. Parents can do a version of this before a play date.



Non-Verbal Language and Social Rule Challenges

All children need to learn how to work in groups but some also need some relief- time to work alone.

Receptive language includes understanding non-verbal cues. Some children have trouble picking up on social norms such as how close to stand near someone; how to read facial and body cues when your friend is getting restless or annoyed. Remember too, these rules are culture bound. What about the child dealing with 2 cultures?

Kids who don't "read" the world of unwritten rules appear and feel uneasy. They may even be bullied because of their awkwardness. Or, they may look like bullies. They might talk too loudly, or touch a person or misinterpret what was said and get angry.



Ways to Help with Social Language

Pragmatics, the term describing social language, includes the ability to know when to make a joke, or when to laugh at one; the give and take when conversing, how to initiate a conversation, and how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Strategies include accommodations and interventions.

- **@ccommodations**: The “at” sign as a visual to remember that accommodations go around the problem. They don’t “fix” the problem but make life easier to manage.
- **In-terventions** are when we go **in and work on** the problem.
- An accommodation: We could talk privately to a more social child and explain that your child, Sam, is shy and ask the more social child if he would start a conversation with Sam.

Accommodations and Interventions

We could plan an activity that doesn't require a lot of talking such as a craft activity, a puzzle or a sport.

None of the strategies "fix" Sam's pragmatics but they enable him to engage.

An intervention might include talking openly about the problem and together you and Sam problem solve:

"What's the hard part about playing with a peer?"

This teaches the child to think about problem solving as a way to make friendships work. Also there may be some parts of the socializing where he may feel okay.



Accommodations for weak pragmatic skills

- He may say that he doesn't know how to begin a conversation. That is an opening to give him some sentences that are good conversation starters:

"Would you like to play a game?"

"Can we have lunch together?"

- Another intervention is to rehearse what might happen, or role play a typical scenario. The child learns the give-and-take of conversation and hears some sample sentences in context.



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Change Takes Time

- Invite only one child for a play date. Keep the date short. Increase the time and number of friends gradually.
- The child needs to feel that you are not annoyed at his hesitations and that you are supporting him.
- Language proficiency has a significant impact on children's social skills.

Now we'll look at it in the academic sphere.....



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Speaking, Reading, Writing

- Typical children's vocabulary increases rapidly, both receptively and expressively, as they move up the grades. Bi-lingual children may have fewer words in each language in the early years, but they catch up.
- The more children are spoken to, read to and read for themselves, the more "typically" developing students gather new words.
- A child who struggles to find the right word when speaking may have trouble learning to read. However, some kids with strong vocabularies may also struggle with reading.
- Some very capable kids may be very confused as to why they are struggling with decoding. Children can have strengths and struggles in different aspects of language.



Reading

Reading consists of both decoding and comprehension.

- Decoding is the process of making sense of the small units of sound on the page in order to read the words.
- In order to decode a child must understand the relationship between the sounds and the symbols that represent the sounds.
- Bi-lingual children may learn to read or write more easily in English or Hebrew or Yiddish. *Why?*



Clues to Possible Decoding Problems

Reading nursery rhymes to children is fun and builds their phonological awareness. Being able to rhyme is an important early reading activity.

- Delayed language is a sign that learning to decode may take longer.
- A child who can't seem to hold on to the names or sounds of the letters gives us another clue that reading might be hard.
- There is great variation in the time it takes to learn to read, but good support is important.
- We don't need labels, just good intervention.



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Clues to Possible Decoding Problems, cont.

- The child who says, “stuff” or “thing” frequently instead of using the precise word may also have trouble with reading.
- These word finding difficulties might show up in the child’s use of a description of the word. She/he may say “grass cutter” instead of “lawn mower.” Or “water holder” instead of “pitcher.”
- Students who have trouble retrieving words can not respond quickly with the targeted word they are asked to read.
- Some students who struggle reading orally are able to read silently and understand the meaning of a passage.
- They are able to pick up the meaning of a passage from context clues and illustrations. These students can correctly answer comprehension questions especially when offered multiple choice questions.
- Multiple choice questions are much easier for students who have a hard time retrieving the answer using total recall.



Decoding Strategies:

Children struggling with decoding benefit from a systematic Reading approach such as:

- Orton Gillingham
- The Wilson Program

Think about the child struggling to decode in two very different language systems.

What would help?

Providing services early is important for the child who is having a hard time acquiring the skills. His self-esteem is suffering.



Reading Comprehension

- Making sense of what you are decoding is what reading is all about. Children with language challenges may have a hard time understanding what they read.
- By 3rd grade kids are supposed to read for pleasure and to acquire knowledge. And yet, for the kids struggling to decode there is no pleasure.
- Strategies for building comprehension skills:
 - We learn comprehension skills best when reading on topics that interest us. *Why?*
 - Help kids connect what they're reading to other experiences. Kids who are challenged with understanding benefit from reading material on a lower decoding level.

Reading Comprehension

- Memory begins to have an important role in helping students remember what they read.
- Sometimes it's hard to tell if the student understood a chapter but couldn't remember it, or if she did not comprehend it.
- Language and memory intersect.
- For memory issues have the student put post it notes summarizing key points on each paragraph.
- Periodically ask them questions about their material.



Spelling

- Children who read often absorb how words are spelled. Good spellers may have internalized spelling rules or have a good visual memory for how a word looks.
- Some students can't hold on to which letter combinations go together—such as “ight” and “ought.” They don't internalize the rules of the English language such as: there is no letter combination “shun” at the end of a word.
- Some students spell well in isolation, but not while writing. These students are probably having active working memory difficulties. They can't do too many things at once. Let them write without thinking about the spelling and then go back and correct their final copy.

Spelling

- Writing is a complex form of expressive language. We need to produce thoughts on paper in a way that others will understand what we are trying to say.
- It entails vocabulary, building a sentences, verbal fluency, using descriptive language elaboration and creating coherence and cohesion.
- Some children write very little because of: handwriting problems; poor spelling that inhibits their production; trouble elaborating on their ideas and producing rich detail; communicating ideas in cohesive passages; lacking transitional ties such as: therefore, most importantly, for instance, on the other hand.

We need to explore where the strengths and challenges are before we suggest strategies. How can we learn where the breakdown is occurring?



Writing Strategies

Stage the work so that students don't get overwhelmed.

1. Chunk the amount you expect at one time.
2. Have them write a draft and not worry about punctuation or spelling.
3. Just have them work on the big ideas.
4. Next, they might work on forming paragraphs and creating the cohesive ties etc.

Create schematic organizers to support comprehension.

1. Speak less and show more.
2. Whenever possible show a couple of models of what the finished product should look like rather than just explaining it in words.



In Closing

Language is the primary tool for academic, emotional and social learning. We have just touched on a few of the linguistic strengths and deficits that have an impact on children's learning- from oral to written to nonverbal communication.

Thank you for participating in this webinar.



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Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

Tues. May 16, 2017

For Parents and Teachers

Building Resilience in Our Children and Students

Presented by Dr. Rona Novick

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Hidden Sparks
to your school or city, please contact us:
[212-767-7707](tel:212-767-7707) or sara@hiddensparks.org**

Contact Presenter:

Claire Wurtzel

cwurtzel@gmail.com

Contact Hidden Sparks:

www.hidden-sparks.org

news@hidden-sparks.org (212) 767-7707

www.facebook.com/HiddenSparks



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