

hiddensparks  
without walls

# Language, Learning and Literacy

with Claire Wurtzel  
December 3, 2008



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# Conference Call Etiquette

- Remember to mute your phone by pressing \*1.
- Press \*1 again, when you would like to speak, this will un-mute your phone.
- Do not use your phone HOLD or mute button. If you do, your music will be broadcast to all of us on the call.



# Our Guest: Claire Wurtzel

Claire Wurtzel is the Director of Faculty Development for the Churchill School and Center in New York, working within and beyond the school to develop the Churchill Center for professional development. Prior to this position, Ms. Wurtzel was the Director of Faculty Development for the New York City *Schools Attuned* initiative for *All Kinds of Minds*, an institute co-founded in by Dr. Mel Levine and Charles Schwab to help educators work effectively with struggling learners. In her capacity as Director, Ms. Wurtzel oversaw Schools Attuned courses, mentor training and facilitator training for over 400 New York City schools.

Ms. Wurtzel is also one of two educational directors for Hidden Sparks, providing training, supervision and ongoing mentoring to the Hidden Sparks teams of coaches, principals and Internal Coaches in twenty-eight *yeshivot*. A long-standing interest of Ms. Wurtzel has been to provide professional development workshops for Jewish Day School educators and has worked to adapt the Schools Attuned professional development program for Jewish day schools.

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## Goals of these two sessions:

- To deepen the understanding of the levels of language and their impact on students' academic and social learning.
- To appreciate the language demands on students in a dual language curriculum.
- To increase the use of strategies to enhance language learning in the classroom.

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# What is Language?

“Language is a consistent, rule regulated, coded system with which one can convey and exchange thoughts, ideas and feelings regarding people, situations and events in the world. The code is agreed upon by the speakers of the language.”

Understanding Language Disorders, by (Ratner and Harris).



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# What is the role of expressive language?

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# Expressive Language

Expressive language is the system used to convey ideas, thoughts, emotions and needs. It is conveyed by speaking, writing, signing and also by body posturing, tone of voice, facial expression and various forms of art.

Some activities that require expressive language:

- Expressing an opinion orally, or in written form.
- Writing an explanation of how you solved a math problem.
- Reading a story aloud.
- Using vocabulary from various subjects appropriately.
- Resolving conflicts.
- Making and keeping friends.

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# What is the role of receptive language?

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# Receptive Language

Receptive language is oral speech that is perceived and processed; signed expressions that are seen and comprehended; and printed language that is read with understanding. It may also be the interpretation of a message expressed in dance, painting or music.

We use receptive language to:

- follow directions.
- process verbal explanations.
- understand questions.
- read and understand a passage.

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# The Components of Language

## From the Smallest Unit to the Largest

### Components of Language

Claire Wurtzel

	RECEPTIVE		EXPRESSIVE	
	Oral	Written	Oral	Written
Phonology				
Morphology				
Semantics				
Syntax				
Discourse				
Pragmatics				

# Phonology

- Phonology is the study and description of the sounds of a language.
- Phonemes are the smallest units of sound and have no meaning by themselves.
- Individual sound units and sound sequences help us to discriminate between sounds.
- There are phonological rules in the English language such as every word has to have a vowel.

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in phonology:

- Is the student able to discriminate the sounds in words?
- Can the student make rhymes and/or recognize them when heard?
- Is the student able to blend the sounds in words?

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# Morphology

- Morphology is the study of word formation and its effect on meaning.
- Morphemes are the smallest unit of meaning.
- For example the word “view” is a **root** word and has one morpheme. It cannot be broken down any further.
- If we add the **prefix**” re”, we get review which has two morphemes.
- If we add the **suffix**” ing” we get reviewing.
- How many morphemes are in the word?

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in morphology:

- Does the student figure out new words by looking at the root word, prefix or suffix?
- Is the student able to add appropriate endings on words? In both English and Hebrew?



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# Semantics

- Semantics is concerned with word meaning and relationships between words.
- It also relates to multiple meanings of words and figurative language- idioms and metaphors.
- It includes the ability to understand words and be able to retrieve words.

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in semantics:

- Does the student understand the meaning of words?
- Does the student have a developed network of synonyms and antonyms?
- Does the student understand and use figurative language?



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# Syntax

- Syntax is the part of grammar which regulates the arrangement of words to form meaningful sentences.
- There are syntactical rules in every language.
- In English, the adjective usually precedes the noun (black cat) and the arrangement of the words in a sentence determines the meaning.
- The boy hit the ball as opposed to the ball hit the boy. The order of verbs, nouns, adjective and adverbs may be placed differently in other languages.

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in syntax:

- Does the student understand instructions?
- Is the word order spoken and written correctly in the student's presentations?
- Does the student understand passive voice?  
An example: The dog was chased by the boy.



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# Discourse

- Discourse refers to language chunks that go beyond a few sentences - paragraphs, chapters, interactive conversations.
- It assumes an understanding and ability to share and elaborate on information in a logical sequence using/and understanding the role of cohesive ties such as therefore and in summary.

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in discourse:

- Does the student make sense of passages during a lengthy reading?
- Is the student able to follow and contribute to ongoing conversations?
- Is there elaboration in the student's writing that has coherence?

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# Pragmatics

- Pragmatics is the ability to use language for a purpose while interacting with other people.
- It begins in infancy- crying to get their needs met at first is instinctive, but soon becomes intentional.
- It includes the ability to know when to make a joke, or laugh at one; the give and take of conversation; resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Pragmatics should be looked at through a cultural lens.

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## Questions to ponder when wondering if a student is strong in pragmatics:

- Does the student have friends? Or, does the student prefer being with adults?
- Is the student isolated-by choice or by peers?
- Does the student do well in cooperative activities?



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# Components of Language

**Components of Language** Claire Wurtzel

	RECEPTIVE		EXPRESSIVE	
	Oral	Written	Oral	Written
<b>Phonology</b>				
<b>Morphology</b>				
<b>Semantics</b>				
<b>Syntax</b>				
<b>Discourse</b>				
<b>Pragmatics</b>				





## Next Session:

Next week we will examine the role of language across subject areas.



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## For homework:

1. Select a student who you suspect may be having difficulty with some aspect of language.
2. Circle the area or areas in which you have a hunch that the student is struggling.
  - a) Receptive language and/or Expressive language
  - b) Component: phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, discourse, pragmatics
3. List some observable behaviors you have observed in this student that makes you think this:

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## Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

- Language, Learning and Literacy Session 2- Dec. 10  
with Claire Wurtzel
- Course on Attention - Dec. 9, Dec. 16  
with Naomi Weiss



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# Contacting Hidden Sparks

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

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks' programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.

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