

Communication Readiness Program



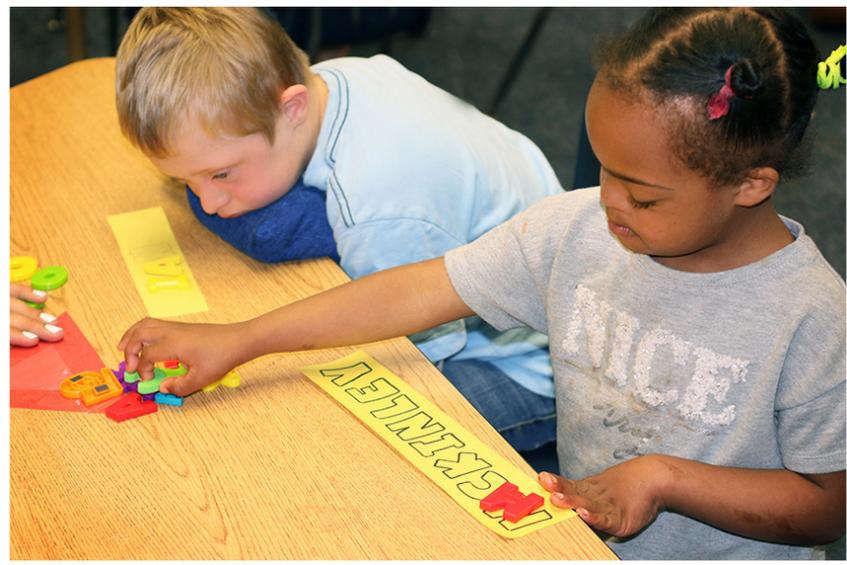
October 2018



Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
Empower - Inspire - Support

The Communication Readiness Program (CRP) is a communication- and literacy-based intensive summer prep program for children ages 4-7, their parents, and their teachers and aides.

Our goal is to prepare these children and their families for starting school in the fall.



Utilizing multi-sensory teaching to target literacy skills.

What We Did

- Monday through Thursday class at two kindergarten classrooms in Danville.
- We used **instructional strategies**—aided language stimulation, scripting and role playing, sabotage, expectant delay, and forced choice.
- We used **interactive strategies**—referencing visual supports, positioning, pacing, and validating.
- Participants learn to make and communicate choices, wait and take turns, learn socialization, and improve fine- and gross-motor skills.
- We focus on creating solutions that allow students to learn, participate with peers, and express basic needs.
- Students learn how to use **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** devices and systems (low-, light-, and high-tech, such as GoTalk Ones, Step-by-Step Communicators, talking photo albums, iPads, etc.)
- Classes are divided roughly by age group (Caterpillars group, ages 4-6 and Butterflies group, ages 5-7)
- 15 children served

- **Classroom activities with communication at their core, including:**

- **Reading**
- **Art and music**
- **Obstacle courses**
- **Following instructions**
- **Speech & occupational therapy**
- **Snack time**
- **Speech & language assessments**

Program Results

- Pre and post-program communication data collected using the *Learning to Learn Behaviors* tool. We looked at **seven foundational academic readiness skills**:
 - Joint attention and social referencing
 - Imitation
 - Purposeful play with toys
 - Social play with peers
 - Functional communication
 - Self-regulation
 - Problem solving
- Nearly all of the children participating made dramatic gains in most of the academic readiness skills studied.

Skills Improvement Increase by End of Program

	Caterpillars	Butterflies
Joint Attention and Social Referencing	17.4%	15.2%
Imitation	15.7%	8.9%
Purposeful Play with Toys	15.9%	11.1%
Social Play with Peers	19.9%	14.4%
Functional Communication	21.7%	11.1%
Self-Regulation	20.4%	17.6%
Problem Solving	9.4%	8%

Sharing Best Practices

- We completed a **research study** on the outcomes of CRP from a communication standpoint, by measuring pre- and post-program communication testing data.
- Goal was to gather evidence to support training and use of instructional and interactive strategies to improve the communication, participation, and socialization of children with Down syndrome and co-occurring diagnoses, such as autism.
- Based on previous pilot data, we expected an increase in verbalizations and AAC system use and an increase in joint attention and social interaction communicative acts.
- We found that children moved beyond simple choice-making to requesting a social routine, relaying information, and commenting.
- We **presented these findings** and information for others to implement these to colleagues across the U.S. and beyond:
 - 2017 TASH (formerly The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps) Conference in Atlanta, Georgia
 - Prentke Romich (PRC) Journal Club
 - American Speech Language & Hearing (ASHA) 2017 annual conference in Los Angeles
 - International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) biannual conference in July 2018 in Australia

What We Are Doing Now?

- We are following each child into the school year, working directly with and training district personnel (teachers, therapists, aides, etc.).
- We provided a resource binder tailored to each child with testing results, observations, and suggested continued skill-building at home and school.
- So far this fall we have met with 14 education teams (general and/or special education teachers, aides, administrators, parents, and others) to provide one-on-one support.

What Parents Are Saying

“The flip book has been very helpful in us mitigating these moments when we can tell his frustration level is rising. He is also attempting new words, or approximations, when prompted or asked to say. He has even started saying ‘Mommy’ rather than simply pointing toward me. Music to my ears!” - Parent

“Emery now has a tool to take to school that allows her to present with her peers and show what she can do. It’s a wonderful bridge. Plus, her peers thought it was cool.” - Parent speaking about the Step-by-Step Communicator

“I really appreciated that there were Spanish-speaking instructors and volunteers. I loved that he was given so much individualized attention.... I saw how he knew exactly how to turn his speech device on and to say ‘I want water’ after finishing the program.” - Parent



Thank You

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