Conversation Starter: Research Encourages Young Children to Talk

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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A USU research project combined reading, writing and photographs into a parent-child activity to boost language and literacy. What's more, it helped families work on goals laid out in their Individualized family service plans.

These individual plans include priorities the family has for a child who is receiving early intervention services. The Using Technology for Emergent Literacy and Language program was developed by researchers at the Center for Persons with Disabilities. It encouraged parents and children to make books together, taking and using photographs in the child’s natural environment. Sometimes, a family’s priority wound up the subject of the home-made book.

Among the study's findings: Mothers in the UTELL group interrupted their children half as often as the mothers whose children received early intervention without the UTELL program. They also responded to their child's questions more than twice as often—while children in the UTELL group asked nearly three times as many questions.

The project also helped families to communicate about difficult subjects. For example, one family made a book about bath time—something the child resisted. "Baths aren’t her favorite, but she doesn’t cry," a parent said after they made the book together.

"We were able to deal with situations that are difficult to him," said another parent.

Note: This is the third in a series of blog posts summarizing presentations made by CPD staff members in late October and early November. They attended the 2010 conference for the Association of University Centers on Developmental Disabilities. Those of you who can stop by our building can check out the research posters in the hallway leading to the CPD’s southwest door.