



Pragmatics in Practice:

Practical Strategies to Promote Pragmatic Skill Development in Early Childhood



Disclosures



Published Authors,
citing our own work

Salaries &
Affiliations



No paid
endorsements





Who We Are & A Little About Us

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Objectives

List 3 actions/strategies → promote pragmatics

Identify tools to measure pragmatics, 0-3 years

Write IFSP/IEP goals to promote prag development





Who is in the audience?

Vevox.app

ID 144-512-461

[https://universityofcolorado8.vevox.com/#/
meeting/569407/polls](https://universityofcolorado8.vevox.com/#/meeting/569407/polls)



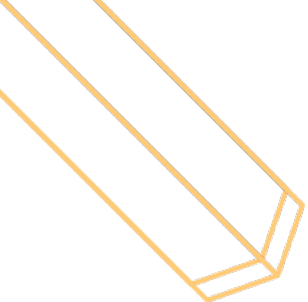
How do you describe pragmatics?

What is Pragmatics?

Tell us your thoughts!



<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1dWuGaf3ibNzhqm0hq8QNq0f2CafJls8iDiMPBTilJ8k/edit?usp=sharing>



Pragmatics Definitions



Use language in
context to engage
with others

Matthews et al., 2018

Socio-cultural & dev.
contexts that shape
exchanges

Kuchiro et al., 2020

Understanding
human interactions
in specific contexts &
engaging

Mood & Szarkowski et
al., 2020

What Pragmatics “Looks Like” in the Early Years



[Video 1 – Dad interprets baby vocalizations](#)

[Video 2 – Dad and baby video](#)



Why Pragmatics are Important

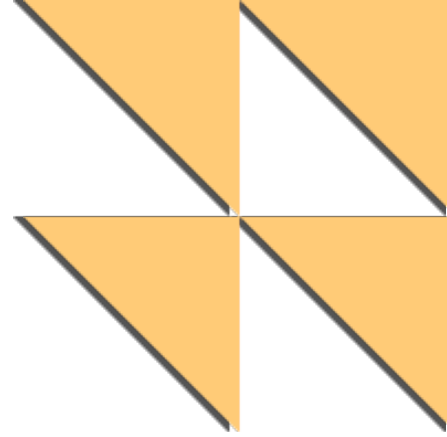
Early Attachment
Social Development
Language Development
Academics
Employment
Well-being





Deaf/Hard of Hearing Adult Perspectives

It was very important to me to not appear “stupid.” So, I would often fake it in situations. I wish I was taught some coping strategies early on. This would have gone a long way in helping develop real relationships. – DHH adult



Pragmatics: The Deaf Experience

Others' Perspectives

She is so quiet

She is a sweet girl

She always watches others

She follows her friends

She smiles a lot



Guess which one is me?



She is sometimes a little awkward

She stares at everyone

She is always scanning the room

The Teacher who knew

She talks but...
I think she
might be Deaf

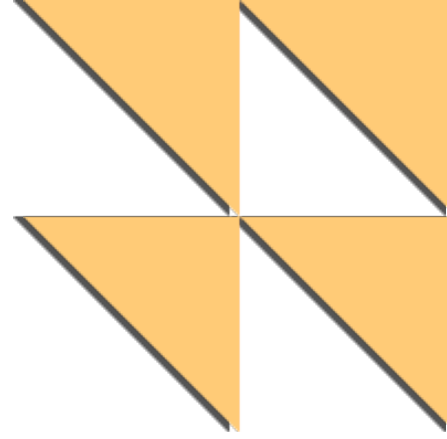
She is always looking at the kids in the back

She is so sweet

She is so quiet

Silent Struggles





Speech isn't
everything!



Simplifying
language
simplifies the
child's world

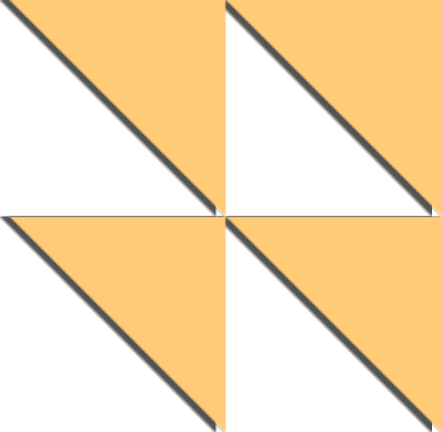


Energy – Exhaustion - Isolation

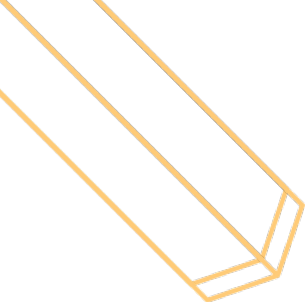


Power of Peers with Shared Lived Experiences





Reflections with Mom



Open Discussion

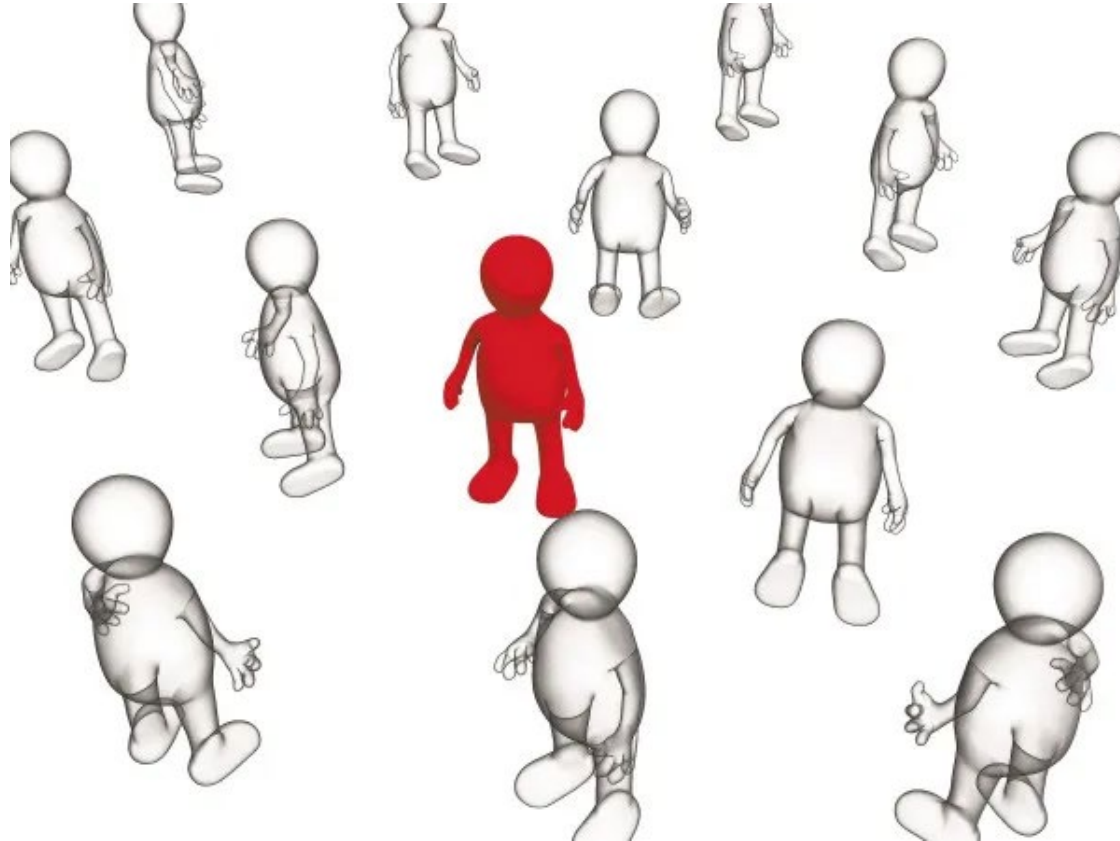


Access

Pragmatics

Well-Being

Lingering into Adulthood



Explaining Pragmatics to Parents

0-5 years
Invite social
interactions,
true/lie

6-12 years
Politeness,
register,
persuade

13-18 years
Humor,
sarcasm,
negotiation

Attachment: The Foundation of Language



Infant & caregiver - Affectionate bond

Infants' security

Internal working model of relationships

Responsiveness to cues → modeling

back-and-forth communication



How can caregivers
& EI Providers
support
pragmatics?



Important skills to master 0-12 months



Social smile

Imitation

Tuning into others' expressions

Early social games (peekaboo)

Early gestures

Early turn taking

Give to comment/request

Point for joint attention

Supporting Pragmatics 0-12 months

Assume all behavior is communication

Coaching to support awareness and response

Let's talk about tech use

Meeting Deaf role models and mentors



Pragmatics at 12- 24 months

[Katie at 18 months](#)

What does pragmatic language look like now?

Nonverbal

Verbal/Signed

Emergence of variety of communicative intents

Play





Strategies to Promote Pragmatics at 12- 24 months

Remember Katie?

**What did caregiver do to
support pragmatics?**



Pragmatics - 24-36 Months

Expansion of Pragmatics Intents

Request
Clarify
Answer questions

Cooperative Play

Emergence of role play

Video:
[Coming home from "work"](#)



Theory of Mind

Why is ToM important?

Mental State verbs

Beyond “narrate your day”

Expanding awareness - books

Early Humor



Video example: Playing with early theory of mind: [“where’s your hand”](#) video



Supporting mind-mindedness & Theory of Mind

Video: [PreK ASL example](#)

Video: [Explaining Hide-and-Go-Seek Hearing Mother/DHH child](#)



Group Exercise

Chloe's Birthday Party

Think about pragmatic skills appropriate for 2-3 year olds



How could you embed more pragmatics focus in this interaction? (as a parent or a provider?)



Building Pragmatics into Daily Routines



Planning chart



Transition to Preschool

Recruiting support from school-based providers who “get” pragmatics

Helping to “share the news” about pragmatics

Considering pragmatics in determining eligibility and need for services

Building pragmatics goals into IEPs- not just vocabulary



Preschool Routines

Dramatic play

Snack time

Playground

Circle time

Welcome & farewell

Sensory play

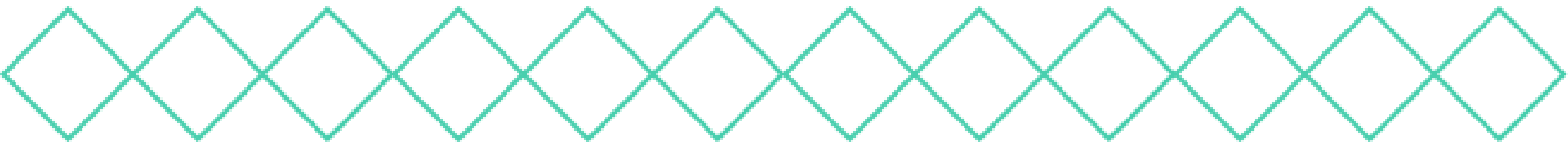
Structured learning time

Specialists

Interventions

Physical Education

Music




Pragmatic Assessment in Early Childhood



Developmental Checklists (e.g. TPBA)

CELF-P Pragmatics checklist



The Pragmatics Checklist (Goberis et al., 2012)

CID Preschool Pragmatic Language Rating Form

Other preferred tools?



Pragmatic Skills Commonly Assessed

“Nonverbal” social communication (eye contact, joint attention, gesture)

Conversations & turn-taking

Understand/use of social conventions (e.g., attention getting, joining conversations/play interactions)

Responding to others’ implicit and explicit communication

Communication to others





Pragmatic Assessment

What is missing?





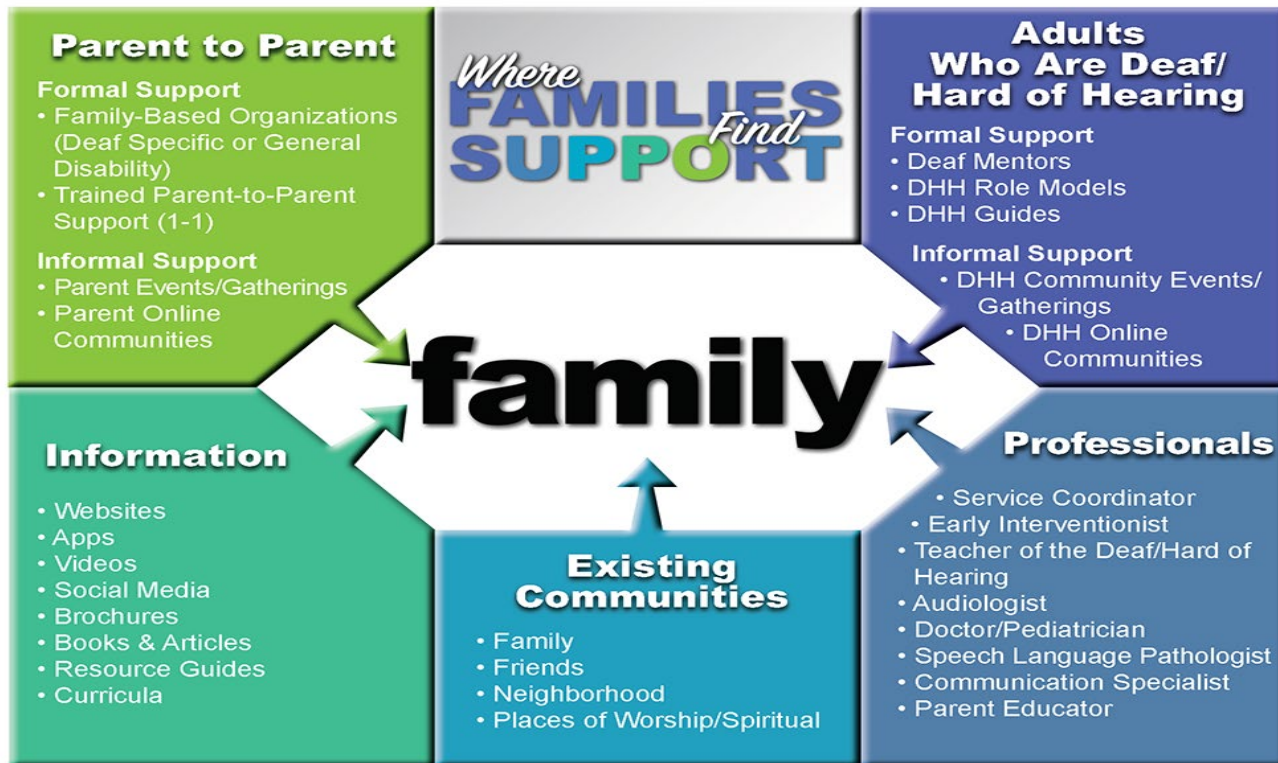
Group Work

Create potential IFSP goals to foster pragmatics in daily routines at home

Create possible IEP goals to foster pragmatics for preschool



Why Families Need Support



- Connect with trained parents
- Family Support Activities Guide
- Increase joy & inspiration - support for their own and their family's well-being

<https://www.handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/fam-fam-support/need-support.html>

Resources for Families



Parent Tip Sheet Language Pragmatics

The social aspects of language, called pragmatics, include the ability to state needs, give commands, and express feelings.

For children to develop social relationships and negotiate their social environment, pragmatic language skills are necessary. Using language to interact appropriately with others, to understand and share their knowledge and imagination is vital to a child's language and social development.

Two aspects of language that are often the most difficult for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing are 1) pragmatic language development and 2) expressive syntax (sentence structure). Even when your child may understand and can say the same amount of words at the same age as other children; and you can understand what your child says/signs, he or she may have not yet developed these skills.

After children have mastered basic skills to be understandable (phonology), have enough vocabulary (semantics), and sentence structure (syntax), children will use this combined knowledge to reach social goals.



- ✓ Identify daily opportunities for your child to state his or her needs; give commands; and express feelings.
- ✓ Model and foster using language to interact with others; request and provide explanations; and demonstrate shared understanding.
- ✓ Provide your child with the language to express their needs.
- ✓ Ask your child to teach the family how to play a game.
- ✓ Help your child understand the differences regarding appropriate social language for adults and peers, as well as familiar and new communication partners.
- ✓ Dig deeper into your child's understanding of social situations.
- ✓ Ask your child to tell you stories about things you, as the parent already know, to help with missing pieces.
- ✓ Tell jokes, say absurd things, play with humor and sarcasm.
- ✓ Ask questions using the 5 W/H words (What, Where, When, Why, How) instead of just yes or no questions.
- ✓ Follow your child's lead and pace in conversational turn-taking.



12 WAYS DEAF ADULTS VISUALLY INTERACT WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Attention

1 ELICIT ATTENTION WITH EYEGAZE
EXAMPLE: move your eyes in the child's line of vision to elicit attention

2 USE POINTING FOR REFERENCE
EXAMPLE: point to object to direct child's attention

3 COMBINE KINESTHETIC, TACTILE & VOCAL STIMULATION
EXAMPLE: tap and wave in child's line of vision

4 SIGN IN SLOWER TEMPO
EXAMPLE: sign HAPPY slowly

5 REPEAT SAME WORDS
EXAMPLE: sign HAPPY multiple times in a row

6 EXAGGERATE MOVEMENTS
EXAMPLE: sign HAPPY big and with extremely wide eyes

7 FOLLOW CHILD'S LEAD
EXAMPLE: start an interaction with a toy a child looks at with interest

8 PROVIDE TIME TO EXPLORE
EXAMPLE: allow child time to explore before initiating or continuing an interaction

9 ENGAGE IN SEQUENTIAL INTERACTION
EXAMPLE: be sure the child is looking at you before initiating a conversation about a toy; if the child breaks eye contact, pause until the child returns their eye gaze back to you

Parentese

Joint Attention

Shared Reading

10 KEEP BOTH LANGUAGES VISIBLE
EXAMPLE: have the book on your stomach facing out to the child and use miniature signs on the book

11 USE ATTENTION MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES
EXAMPLE: tap child lightly and shift book to attract attention

12 ADJUST SIGN PLACEMENT TO FIT THE STORY
EXAMPLE: sign on the book or child



Resources

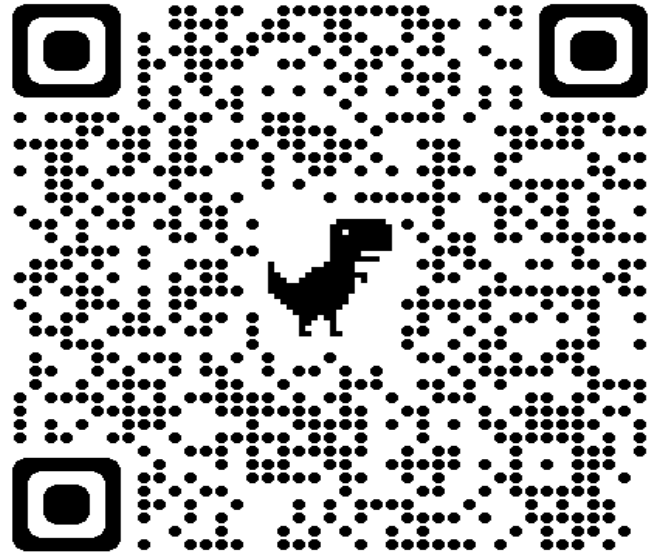
Pediatrics Pragmatics Articles

Theory of Mind resource

Mental State terms

Pragmatics milestones &
intervention

Pragmatic assessment
comparison tool



Our North Star



Who can play to learn more?

How will your family support early intervention grow this year?

WWDWBW?

Creating a Better World for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Through Pragmatics

Thank you!



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