



SPEECH LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICES

Dear Parents,

This year, the Oral Language for Early Years (OLEY) program will be running in your child's Prep classroom. The aim of this program is to help students increase their oral (spoken) language skills. Good oral language skills will assist students to have greater classroom participation and has been strongly linked to successful development of reading and writing skills. The OLEY program also assists in identifying those students who may require additional support in grade one.

The development of oral language is crucial to a child's literacy development, including listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Research has found that oral language plays a key role in building a foundation for reading. In general, children who possess well-developed oral language skills are more likely to become successful readers (Sticht & James, 1984; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Oral language has been clearly identified as a significant factor in literacy development and reading in particular (Cooper, 2003; Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2004; Sheil, 2002; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). Early childhood teachers clearly need to attend to children's oral language development in planning and delivering programs to support early literacy (Making connections to promote early literacy: innovative research project. Australian Government: Department of Education, Science and Training).

What is Oral Language?

- Language is predominantly made up of three areas, receptive and expressive language, as well as pragmatics.
- **Expressive language** refers to the ability to *express ideas, wants and needs* (e.g., naming objects, using the correct words, using the correct grammar and sentence structure, retelling a story)
- **Receptive language** refers to the ability to *understand language* (e.g., understanding words, following directions, concept (e.g., first, after, between) knowledge, understanding different types of sentences)
- **Pragmatics** is the term used to describe *social skills or conversational behaviours*. Pragmatics includes taking turns, greeting others, understanding body language, starting a conversation, selecting appropriate conversational topics and appropriately disagreeing.

What is the OLEY?

The OLEY program was designed as a whole class program, which may be implemented with both small and large groups, or with individuals in prep classrooms. It has been developed as eight one hour sessions, which once introduced, may be revisited regularly for additional practice. Each session is based on an element of the Early Years Curriculum, and consists of an initial whole class activity, followed by several small group activities. The activities are all presented as games and other highly motivating activities.

Each week, an activity sheet will be sent home with your child. This sheet has an oral language game/activity for parents to do with their child. These activities will help your child to revise skills they learnt in the week's OLEY session therefore, maximising the benefits of participating in this program.

If you have any other questions or concerns please do not hesitate to speak to your child's Class Teacher or the Speech Language Pathologist.