

# The SECA

FALL 2010

# REPORTER



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Southern Early Childhood Association



# Make Time to Talk: How Young Children Develop Oral Language

The National Institute of Literacy is developing a series of publications for early childhood programs (both center-based and home-based) that focus on developing early literacy in young children. These publications are designed as practical, hands-on informational materials that can be used easily by an early childhood teacher.

*Make Time to Talk* is the latest in the series, and this booklet focuses on developing oral language in young children. The publication can be used by early childhood teachers to....

- “Learn about the development of oral language skills in the preschool years
- Understand the important role that

oral language skills play in children’s later reading and thinking skills, and

- Find out how to create an environment that helps children build strong oral language skills.”

Excerpted from *Make Time to Talk*, page 1, National Institute for Literacy, 2010, [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

## Make Time to Talk

Language Building Tips for Center-Based Child Care Providers

We know that it’s important to talk every day with each child, using the kind of talk that builds language and thinking skills. The phrase **MAKE TIME TO TALK** is to help you remember things you can do when talking to children to help them learn new vocabulary and how to use language to express their ideas and needs, and that helps them have fun with language.

<b>M</b>	Mealtimes can be good opportunities for individual and small group conversations with children.
<b>A</b>	Ask questions that encourage the child to think—questions involving analysis, prediction, imagining things that could happen.
<b>K</b>	Kneel or squat to be able to have eye contact with the child.
<b>E</b>	Extend your conversation with the child. Conversations should go back and forth with each person responding to other speaker at least a few times.
<b>T</b>	Themes help children understand and remember the meanings of new words, especially when you build activities around a theme.
<b>I</b>	Involve all of the children in the group in at least one individual conversation every day.
<b>M</b>	Make connections with books the class has read and recent classroom activities to help build meaning.
<b>E</b>	Expand on the child’s language by repeating it with extensions (adding descriptive words, using words correctly that child used incorrectly), adding to or building on the child’s ideas.
<b>T</b>	Two-way conversations mean that the child should be doing at least half the talking.
<b>O</b>	One or more individual conversations should take place with each child in the setting every day.
<b>T</b>	Texts, such as books, posters, newspapers, and magazines provide shared topics to talk about. Read them with the child, asking questions and discussing them as you go along.
<b>A</b>	Act out stories with the children, re-using words from the book you read aloud with the children.
<b>L</b>	Language should include rich, varied vocabulary in talking with the child that build on classroom themes and experiences.
<b>K</b>	Keep the conversation going through questions, expansions, comments.



To place an order for free print copies or to download a PDF or HTML version of this sheet, please visit [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).

Make Time to Talk is based on the National Institute for Literacy publication Learning to Talk and Listen (2009), and the National Early Literacy Panel Report (2009). This publication was produced under National Institute for Literacy Contract No. ED-04-CD-0041 for RMC Research Corporation. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policies of the National Institute for Literacy. No official endorsement by the National Institute for Literacy of any product, commodity, entity, or enterprise in this publication is intended or should be inferred.

## How Young Children Develop Oral Language

**Infants** listen to and become aware of sounds of the words being spoken by the adults around them. Very early on children begin to communicate their own needs through sounds and gestures.

**Toddlers** use language to express feelings and ideas and seek information. They begin to talk in simple sentences, ask questions and give opinions about likes and dislikes.

**Young preschoolers** build a larger vocabulary from the language of people around them and from new ideas in books. They tell make-believe stories and talk about things and events that are not in the here-and-now, such as things they cannot see, events that have already happened or might happen in the future. They use language that is more complex, with complete sentences and sentences with multiple parts.

Excerpted from *Make Time to Talk*, page 2, National Institute for Literacy, 2010, [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

## Using Children’s Literature as a Tool to Build Oral Language

The publication promotes “shared reading” as a powerful way to build oral language. Going beyond just reading to the child or group helps promote more language development opportunities. Some suggestions for

The pdf resource above can be found by following this link:  
[http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/language\\_tipsheet.pdf](http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/language_tipsheet.pdf)

continued on next page

early childhood teachers:

- Read with a small group (most effectively with a group of 1-3 children.)
- Focus on vocabulary—pick new words and ideas from the stories.
- Emphasize the use of abstract language—encourage children to use language to describe things that they can't actually see in the book.

- Ask questions and encourage discussion.
- Read stories more than once.
- Build on themes.

Excerpted from *Make Time to Talk*, pages 11-12, National Institute for Literacy, 2010, [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

## Make Time to Talk

Language Building Tips for Home-Based Child Care Providers

We know that it's important to talk every day with each child, using the kind of talk that builds language and thinking skills. The phrase **MAKE TIME TO TALK** is to help you remember things you can do when talking to children to help them learn new words and how to use language to tell you their ideas and needs, and that helps them have fun with language.

<b>M</b>	Mealtimes can be good times to talk with children.
<b>A</b>	Ask questions that encourage the child to think—questions involving predicting things that might happen, using imagination, explaining why things happened in a particular way.
<b>K</b>	Kneel or squat to be able to have eye contact with the child.
<b>E</b>	Extend your conversation with the child. Conversations should go back and forth with each person responding to other speaker at least a few times.
<b>T</b>	Tell stories to the children and ask them to tell you stories about their families and lives.
<b>I</b>	Involve all of the children in the group in conversation every day. Talk with children about what they are making, ask about their play.
<b>M</b>	Make connections between themes, books the class has read, recent classroom activities, and children's own play to help build children's understanding of word meanings.
<b>E</b>	Expand on child's language by repeating it with extensions (adding descriptive words, using any words correctly that child used incorrectly), adding to or building on child's ideas.
<b>T</b>	Two-way conversations are best. The child should be doing at least half the talking.
<b>O</b>	One or more individual conversations with each child in the setting every day should be a goal.
<b>T</b>	Texts such as books, posters, newspapers, and magazines provide things to talk about with children. Read them together, asking questions and discussing them as you go along.
<b>A</b>	Act out stories with the children, re-using words from a book you read aloud with the children. Encourage them to retell the story with puppets, toys, and in their art.
<b>L</b>	Language should include rich, varied words that you want the child to learn to understand and use.
<b>K</b>	Keep the conversation going through questions and comments.

 National Institute for Literacy

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*The Southern Early Childhood Association is committed to assisting early childhood professionals in learning how to develop effective early literacy programs and to the use of quality children's literature to promote language development.*

### Some resources SECA has developed for you:

- **What's New in Children's Literature?** –a publication designed to introduce you to the newest in good children's books. This is a SECA member benefit and is produced each year. You'll find it located on the "members-only" page on the SECA website at [www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org) in PDF format. We currently have the 2008 and 2009 edition available. The 2010 edition will be posted in December and we'll send you an e-mail to let you know the new one is available to you. You can download and share with your colleagues in your center or home.
- The fall 2002 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* is focused on "early literacy" and, although it's older, you'll find some good information there. The issue is available on the SECA website in the "members-only" section.
- If you're interested in a compilation of articles on early literacy from *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, we have it available at low cost on CD. Go to the on-line store on the SECA website to purchase a copy.

To download FREE copies of the publication, *Make Time to Talk*, or the *Tips* pages, go to the website of the National Institute for Literacy, [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).

# GREEN SCHOOLYARDS & PLAYGROUNDS: CREATING OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS

Education reform is high on the national agenda and one group, **The Green Schoolyard Network**, is launching an effort to bring the idea of “outdoor classrooms” into that discussion.

The goal of the Network is “to see green schoolyards and outdoor classrooms become an integral part of public education in America.” With over 100,000 K-2 schools throughout the country, revitalizing open spaces that exist on public school grounds can have a significant impact on the quality of education.

*There is a long history around what a school is, what is taught there, by whom and how, as well as embedded perceptions about the types of buildings and spaces where these practices traditionally occur. However, there is a need to challenge existing assumptions if new learning and play spaces for the future are to be built, and this requires taking a different approach to imagine a whole range of different possibilities.*

Source: [www.futurelab.org.uk](http://www.futurelab.org.uk)

## Why Would We Want Outdoor Classrooms in Every School?

According to Kirk Meyer, Executive Director of the Green Schoolyards Network there are dozens of reasons to have outdoor classrooms. In a May 13, 2010 posting on the website blog, he lists his Top 10 Reasons.

### 1. **The Outdoor Classroom shifts the educational focus**

**from secondary to primary sources.** “Traditional classroom teaching uses textbooks, lectures, video and the internet as instructional tools. The outdoor classroom exposes students through direct experience to nature areas and demonstration models such as weather stations, water flow systems and renewable energy installations.”

2. **The Outdoor Classroom uses experiential teaching methodologies to engage students.** “The Outdoor Classroom fosters active, hands-on, inquiry-based learning in a real world setting. Through group problem-solving activities students embrace the learning process as well as seeking final outcomes.”

3. **The Outdoor Classroom makes learning a multi-sensory experience.** “By engaging the senses of touch, smell, hearing and seeing,

students retain an intimate physical memory of activities that are long lasting and synergistic.”

4. **The Outdoor Classroom fosters the use of systems thinking.** “As a mini-ecosystem, the Outdoor Classroom emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things.”

5. **The Outdoor Classroom lends itself to interdisciplinary studies.** “Laying out a planting bed requires math skills. Distinguishing native from non-native plants provides an opportunity for social studies. Creating a scarecrow is an art project. A garden journal will foster writing and drawing skills.”

6. **The Outdoor Classroom recognizes and celebrates differing learning styles.** “As popularized in Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, people have a



*Girl with caterpillar  
photo from The Green Schoolyard Network website,  
<http://greenschoolyardnetwork.org/>*

*continued on next page*

variety of aptitudes and ways of learning. Although some students thrive in a text-based environment, others will benefit from a more experiential approach.”

7. **The Outdoor Classroom connects the school to the neighborhood and the world-at-large.** Through learning and stewardship activities, students come to understand that their school-yard microcosm reflects global environmental issues. Proximity to the surrounding neighborhood often leads to service learning projects that emphasize social involvement and responsibility.”
8. **The Outdoor Classroom is a modest capital expense.** “The cost/benefit ratio for installing and sustaining an Outdoor Classroom is attractive and the goal of an Outdoor Classroom in every schoolyard is achievable.”
9. **The Outdoor Classroom projects a positive message about public education.** “Schoolyards can be degraded and unsafe or vibrant, dynamic school/community open spaces. Either way, we send a message to students and neighborhoods about how much we value the education of our children.”
10. **The Outdoor Classroom blurs the boundaries between academic learning and creative play.** “By preserving a child’s innate sense of curiosity and wonder, we will foster active and engaged life learners.”

<http://greenschoolyardnetwork.org/2010/05/13/top-ten-reasons-to-have-an-outdoor-classroom/>



Raised bed for gardening  
photo from The Green Schoolyard Network website,  
<http://greenschoolyardnetwork.org/>

### Does an Outdoor Classroom Work for Early Childhood Programs?

We all know that outside play is important for young children but can the Outdoor Classroom be used for educational activities as well?

In the fall 2005 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, we focused on the theme of “*Inside Out, Outside In: Active Bodies and Active Minds*”. The articles in that issue were designed to provide information and resources on keeping children active to enhance learning.

An article, *Math and Science Go Outside*, by Sally Moomaw, highlighted how an outdoor classroom can be used to introduce new concepts in those areas. “*Children are captivated with math and science experiments, especially when they’re messy and take place in the fresh air and sunshine.*” *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, Vol 33: 3, pg. 27-32.

Another article, *The Language Arts Get Physical: Fun, Fitness and Fundamentals* by Vikki K. Collins,

Sallie Averitt Miller and H. Marguerite Yates, related physical activity and the acquisition of literacy skills, all of which could be fostered in an Outdoor Classroom. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, Vol 33:3, pgs. 33-40.

Young children will love the opportunity to learn in an Outdoor Classroom. “**Put on some sneakers, take the children, and GO PLAY!**”

### Resources

The Green Schoolyard Network  
<http://greenschoolyardnetwork.org>

*Inside Out, Outside In: Active Bodies and Active Minds*, *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, Vol 33:3  
(PDF version available on the members-only section of the SECA website at [www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org) )

Schoolyard Related Publications  
<http://greenschoolyardnetwork.org/green-schoolyard-resources/>

# THE **BIG HELP** GRANT PROGRAM:

## “MILLION DOLLARS FOR A MILLION MOVES”

Throughout 2010, Nickelodeon will award \$1 million in grants to schools and community organizations to enable kids around the country to achieve the goal of a “**million acts of help**”. The Big Help Grant program will support projects that:

- Inspire kids to take care of the environment
- Lead active, healthy lives
- Engage in community service
- Improve their educational experience.

The grant applications will be judged on 1) creativity, 2) feasibility, 3) educational experience, 4) direct impact on kids and/or their school, club or community, 5) short-and-long term projected outcomes and 6) project efficiency.

For more information about the grant program, go to <http://pro-social.nick.com/grant-application/>. An **Outdoor Classroom** might be just the ticket to a grant!



### Who's Eligible?

- Elementary and middle schools grades K-9 (public and private not-for-profit)
- After-school community-based organizations with a 501-c3 status that serve kids age 5-15.

## An Invitation from Exchange Magazine

SECA has joined with Child Care Exchange to provide special SECA member benefits. **You'll find a link on our home page for Child Care Exchange that leads you to a special SECA page with discounts on Exchange resources for our members.**

We also want you to know about professional opportunities with our “strategic partners” and we’re sending you this invitation from Exchange on behalf of Bonnie Neugebauer, *Exchange* Editor.

### An Invitation From Bonnie Neugebauer

Dear Colleagues in the Early Childhood Community,

*Exchange* magazine is your magazine because it is written by people like you, people who live the life of early childhood education. We need your contributions--expertise, experience, feedback, ideas and dreams to create the strongest early childhood community possible.

As part of our mission for connecting people, we are continually searching for new writers, new ideas, new perspectives. This message is an invitation for you to write for *Exchange*. You are the experts who know how to work with families, staff and children. You have tremendous skills for meeting challenges and building strong programs. We want our writing community to be as diverse as possible in every way that it's possible to be diverse--type of organization you work with/for, community you represent, culture that you are part of, training that you have experienced, goals that you set, extent and variety of experiences in the field. All of these perspectives are valuable for our readers.

So, if you have an interest in writing what you know, please contact us. We will connect you with Donna Rafanello, *Exchange* Associate Editor and Writing Project Director. Donna works with all writers to prepare their work for submission; she is a writing mentor to everyone and is available for assistance and support to anyone with an idea, outline, draft or article. [http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/writing\\_mentor.php](http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/writing_mentor.php)

Come, be part of the *Exchange* writing community and share yourself and your expertise with early childhood leaders around the world.

Sincerely,  
Bonnie

# Promise Neighborhoods

In the South, poverty and lack of educational achievement go hand-in-hand. Because the South's children face more challenges due to socio-economic factors, initiatives that promote healthy communities are particularly important.

**Promise Neighborhoods** is a new federal initiative designed to “break the cycle of generational poverty by improving educational outcomes and overall life prospects of low-income children and families.” On September 21, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education announced that twenty-one (21) communities (from an applicant pool of 339) across the nation had been selected to receive grants of between \$300,000 and \$500,000 to develop a plan that delivers a “continuum of solutions that address their most pressing neighborhood challenges”. **Of those 21 communities, seven (7) were located in the SECA states.**

## What is a Promise Neighborhood?

The *Harlem Children's Zone* is a proven initiative that has addressed many of the significant challenges of that New York City neighborhood and was used as the starting point to develop the initiative. The Promise Neighborhoods' vision is that “all children growing up in Promise Neighborhoods have access to effective schools and strong systems of family and community support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and career.” The program is designed to support innovative programs that improve the lives of children in some of the most distressed neighborhoods in America.

Source: [www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org](http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org)

## The Projects in the South: Did Your Community Receive a Grant?

Grantee Community	City/State	Grant Amount
Athens-Clarke County Family Connection	Athens-Clarke County, GA	\$500,000
Berea College	Clay, Jackson & Owsley Counties, KY	\$500,000
Delta Health Alliance, Inc.	Indianola, MS	\$332,531
Morehouse School of Medicine	Atlanta, GA	\$500,000
Neighborhood Centers, Inc.	Houston, TX	\$500,000
United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County- Partners for Community Change	San Antonio, TX	\$500,000
University of Arkansas at Little Rock	Little Rock, AR	\$430,098

If you live in one of the communities that was fortunate enough to receive a grant, make sure that early childhood programs are an integral part of the planning process. You touch the lives of many of the children and families for whom the Promise Neighborhood will be a fresh start.

To find more information about your community and its application, go to <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>

*“Strong communities start with healthy children who have safe places to live and play and high quality educational opportunities that put them on the road to success,”* according to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius at the grant announcement.

*“Communities across the country recognize that education is the one true path out of poverty. These Promise Neighborhoods grantees are committed to putting schools at the center of their work to provide comprehensive services for young children and families.”* U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan

Source: [www.ed.gov/new/pres-releases](http://www.ed.gov/new/pres-releases), 9/22/2010

# 62<sup>nd</sup>

Annual Conference of the  
Southern Early Childhood Association

# MOVING & PLAYING

KEEPING SOUTHERN CHILDREN HEALTHY AND HAPPY



## Featuring Keynotes By:

- Dr. David T. Tayloe of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Don Monopoli of The Learning Station
- Rae Pica of Moving and Learning
- 2011 Director's Seminar with Holly Elissa Bruno of Holly Elissa Bruno Keynotes and Teambuilding
- 2011 Public Policy Luncheon with Dr. Joe Thompson of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity

January 27-29, 2011  
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Savannah, GA

Online registration now available.  
Go to [www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org) for more information

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