

Language Play Group

An 8-week Pilot Program for 3 to 4 year old children with Down Syndrome

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Most children with Down Syndrome have delays in language acquisition which may be caused by auditory deficiencies, articulation disorders, or problems with the concepts of object identity and object permanency. Traditionally, children with Down Syndrome have been able to access speech and language services during the first two years of their lives. The average two-year old children with Down Syndrome may not be exhibiting significant communication development at this time - the age when these services suddenly diminish.

Early intervention for preschool-aged children with language and developmental delays is appropriate and significantly contributes to the continued development of language skills. Many parents of children with Down Syndrome report that there is a lack of therapy services for children over the age of two years in the London area. In an effort to address this gap in services for children with Down Syndrome, Speech-Language Pathologists, J. Anthony Wray and Krystyna Paczkowski have designed an 8-week pilot program. This new program entitled the Language Play Group will provide language-based therapy groups for 3 to 4 year old children with Down Syndrome. The groups will meet for one and a half hours, and will involve four children, one speech-language pathologist, and one communication assistant. The play group will include language-rich activities based on themes which may include songs, crafts, and stories. An emphasis on language stimulation and group interaction will be targeted.

Parents interested in participating in the pilot program will be required to complete a telephone intake survey, to attend a 1-hour pre-program assessment session, to complete a language inventory questionnaire, and to provide a recent video tape of a 15-minute interaction with their child which demonstrates their current communication level. The children attending the pilot program should: be able to function within a group setting; exhibit emerging language skills; be ambulatory (as the program is not wheel-chair accessible); and, be able to attend to sounds and verbal directions.

This program was offered in September 1997; however, insufficient families expressed an interest in the program.

Written by J. Anthony Wray, Speech-Language Pathologist (1997).