



# Helping Children Express Their Wants and Needs

## HANDOUT

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**Teachers and other caregivers can use several strategies to facilitate children's communication skill development and consequently help prevent challenging behavior.**

- ✓ **Read the child's body language.**  
*Kaydee will often point to the refrigerator and point to her mouth. Her mother has discovered that this is Kaydee's way of indicating that she is hungry.*
- ✓ **Provide the child with choices.**  
*Getting dressed in the morning is easier for Deniz's mother and father now that they have started giving their son choices of which shoes, pants, and shirt to wear.*
- ✓ **Provide picture schedules to help a child move easily between activities.**  
*Ms. Lee developed a picture schedule to document the snack time routine (wash hands, get utensils and napkin, find seat, eat, throw away trash, wash placemat). Sarah has had a much easier time following the snack routine now that she has a visual reminder of the steps.*
- ✓ **Segment multiple-step directions and provide cues so the child better understands the expectations.**  
*Rather than saying "It's time to go home, get your things," Ms. Gonzales prompts 3-year-old Ari by cuing him with each step separately. For example, she might say, "Go get your backpack. Put this newsletter in your backpack for Mom and Dad. Now get your coat," and so on.*
- ✓ **Model communication skills.**  
*Mr. Forbes has noticed that Desiree has a hard time telling him what she wants. He has identified several words that he thinks will help her, including more, help, toy, play, and juice. Throughout the day, he looks for opportunities to model these words for her.*

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