What Parents Can Do to Promote Good Oral Language Skills:

- Build Vocabulary – Label everything you see, in a natural manner, e.g. “Look at the bird outside.” Label what you see when you’re driving the car, grocery shopping, or out in the community!
- Narrate your activities – e.g., “We need to set the table. Let’s get the forks, napkins and cups.” Describe what you are doing when you’re cooking, cleaning, baking, etc.
- Describe what your child is doing when they are playing – e.g., “You have a blue car. That’s my favorite color. You’re making it go up a hill.”
- Talk about your family – Talk about your child and who they live with, as well as extended family. Talk about how many members are in your family, their ages, who looks like who, etc. Explain how your child is related to other family members.
- Describe items/toys around the house – Talk about colors, sizes, textures, shapes and smells of items.
- Ask your child questions and encourage them to do the same – Ask them what they did during the day at school. Ask them ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘where’ questions about their toys, actions and likes/dislikes. Ask them “Do you have questions for me?”. If they don’t, model questions for them.
- Talk about your jobs – Many children don’t know what their parents do. No matter what you do, your children are fascinated by it. Talk about the details, e.g. “I am a cook. I make pizza. I use cheese, tomato sauce and chourico.”
- Label and describe any animal you can imagine – Children love animals! Label zoo animals, farm animals, pets. Talk about what they look like, where they live, and what they eat.
- Play with toys that stimulate language – Children need toys that will help them use their imaginations and practice the skills they are learning. Toys such as play foods, puzzles, dolls, cars, trains, bubbles, legos, blocks, pretend tools, playdoh and animals are great toys to stimulate language. Some great games for young children are: Hi-Ho Cherry O, Matching Games, Chutes and Ladders, Old Maid.
- Visit your local library – It is free! They not only have books, but they also have toys! Most libraries have story hour, guest speakers and special events. Libraries also offer discounted passes to the zoo, aquariums, and local museums. It is important to promote a love for reading at an early age!
- Work with your child in your native language – If a child has a strong foundation in their native language, they will learn English quicker. Hearing and speaking multiple languages does not harm children, rather it helps them. They will learn how to separate languages and when and when to use them.
- Expand on utterances – For example, if your child says “car”, say “blue car” or “a big blue car.” Model what you think they are capable of repeating.