

MAYA'S SPEECH

Key Focus: Language Development

Observation: The teacher is reviewing notes that she took that day on mailing labels as she pastes them into children's folders under the appropriate domains. Maya has an identified expressive language delay. The teacher adds a number of labels to Maya's folder, noting the date each time.

The first label reads:

After my re-reading the same story to the class the last three days, Maya correctly answered:

T: Name of book

M: Pancakes

T: Where will he get the milk?

M: Cow

The second label reads:

10:15 M: bathroom

M came across the room to tell me she needed the bathroom.

The third label notes:

Dramatic play: M smiling and doing what the other children do or tell her to do; no speech.

Reflecting on the Documentation:

**Participants may quickly shift from reflecting on the documentation to interpreting the observation or suggesting strategies for extending learning. Remind participants to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the documentation technique.*

Ask: How does this observation cut across time and setting?

Sample Responses: This observation does not just capture Maya at one point, but rather looks at her language at different points in the day, in different centers. This approach gives us a broader sense of her language interactions, with whom she is talking, and when they occur. For example, she exhibits one- or two-word responses in a direct 1:1 interaction with the teacher. It provides information about differences in interactions with adults and with other children.

Interpretation of the Observation:

Ask: What can you learn about the child from these observations?

**Remind participants that in their interpretation they are looking for patterns, critical incidents, or errors. It is important to stick to the data.*

Sample Responses: Maya seems to understand the questions, as evidenced by her ability to give correct responses about the plot and name of the book she reads with the teacher. Maya is able to produce one- or two-word phrases and is able to produce nouns for things she is trying to describe (e.g., bathroom) in her one-to-one interactions with the teacher. She spontaneously produces the word "bathroom." However, in interactions with peers she seems to be part of the interaction, yet does not speak.

As often occurs in examining data, questions arise and we may form hypotheses that need to be tested with further observations. What isn't happening or isn't working well can tell us a lot about where a child may need further support. Does Maya only speak with adults? Does she produce any one- or two-word utterances with peers? How can we find out more about the circumstances under which she talks with peers?

Relating Your Observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

**Although participants can defend other interpretations, there should be general consensus that this observation demonstrates:*

1B4 (Language Development/ Speaking and Communicating):

Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.

Next steps for large group instruction:

**Help participants make connections between what they learn from the assessment and the next steps they want to take in instruction. If suggestions for instruction extend activities to new areas of learning, ask participants to consider what aspects of children's progress they would assess and how they would do so during those extension activities.*

Ask: What would you recommend that the teacher do next for the class as a whole?

Sample Responses: During morning meeting time have children take turns being greeter for the day, greeting each child by name and asking how they are, waiting for a response. Since Maya appears comfortable in the dramatic play area, you might attempt to produce a play with the class where all children have a sentence or two to speak. Maya can be given a sentence of only two or three words, but the repetition might help her expand her language.

Next steps for individualized instruction:

Ask: How does Maya's language development compare with those of children with "normative" language development. How can you find out?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Since Maya has an identified speech delay, there would be additional information in her IEP. You might look at language development milestones for children between the ages of 3 and 5 or at the expectations in your assessment tool. It appears that Maya is functioning as a 2-3 year-old in producing only two-word sentences.
- Ask her speech and language therapist, special education consultant, and her parents how you can support her language more.

Ask: Describe what you could do in each scenario to promote Maya's use of language.

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- In the book-reading example, you might extend Maya's language. "He will get the milk *from the cow.*" Or "he will *milk the cow*" emphasizing the three words you would like Maya to repeat. You might prompt her "Maya, say: 'from the cow.'"
- If Maya showed a strong interest in something from the book, you might use props that correspond to the story in the book. For example, you might cut out a picture of the cow and play a language game with the placement of the cow. You can ask, "Where is the cow?" and Maya can place the cow where she wants (e.g., "The cow is on the book," "The cow is on the table," "The cow is on my head"). The repetition of the language may help Maya to use sentences longer than one or two words.
- In the bathroom example, you might help her extend her sentence (for example, "You need to go to the bathroom." or "You went to the bathroom"), or you might have her repeat "bathroom please."
- In the dramatic play area, you can play with the children and create opportunities for Maya to engage in conversation with the other children—even if it is just one word—so that she feels more comfortable interacting with peers. Prompt her peers to ask Maya questions that can be answered with one or two words. You might also teach a peer to ask her questions, wait for a response for a minute, and then prompt for responses from Maya.

Ask: Together with her parents and language consultants, write a monthly goal for Maya's language development. How would you assess whether you were meeting this goal?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Each month I would work on a different sentence for Maya to learn like "I want a ___" for Maya to add an extra word to her sentence length. I would assess this by following her for one day a month writing down verbal vignettes throughout the day or noting each time she first repeated and then independently said these words and the context.
- Or I would have her repeat three- to four-word sentences that we use frequently. I'd keep a list of these and underline each time the words that she repeats or independently uses.

Additional Notes: How would your responses change if you learned that English was not Maya's first language? Would this change your perceptions of her language development?