



## Birth–12 Months

### Communication/Language: Receptive & Expressive Language<sup>1</sup>

**WHEN INTRODUCED:** Block 1

#### BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Receptive language
  - Responds to an adult's words<sup>2</sup>
  - Aware of the meaning of several words
- Expressive language
  - Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver

## EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, such as a mealtime or a diaper change; playtime; or during a guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Communication/ Language) are cited in parentheses.

### Receptive language

#### Responds to an adult's words

- turns head and/or looks toward the person speaking
- kicks legs, reaches with hand/arm, waves arms
- makes a verbal utterance

#### Aware of the meaning of several words

- looks or smiles when hears his/her name
- points to a pictured object(s) or person a caregiver names, such as
  - parts of an animal (Block 4, Option 3) or types of animals (Block 2, Option 3; Block 6, Option 3)
  - parts of a baby (Block 7, Option 3; Block 10, Option 3; Block 15, Option 3; Block 17, Option 3)
  - a baby (Block 18, Option 3), cup (Block 14, Option 3)
- points to a part of own body named by caregiver, such as eyes (Block 10, Option 3) or nose (Block 15, Option 3)



- responds with appropriate gestures or actions, such as
  - moving hands or scarf when caregiver says “peekaboo” (Block 8, Option 2)
  - waves when caregiver says “bye-bye” (Block 20, Option 3)
  - smiles when a caregiver requests “smile big!”

## Expressive language

### Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver during

- care routines, such as when the infant sees a bottle
- a book sharing
- experiences with repetitive book text or games, including saying a word with a caregiver (Block 7, Option 3; Block 13, Option 3; Block 2, Option 3)
- open-ended or guided playtimes, such as seeing a desired toy
- arrival and departure times

## EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

### Reintroduce

#### Receptive language

##### Responds to an adult’s words

- Emphasize a simple word or phrase, such as “baby,” “uh-oh,” or “all gone,” when you speak with an infant. Use an exaggerated tone of voice, such as a raised pitch, and repeat the word or phrase. Describe the infant’s response to your word(s), such as facial expressions or utterances. Example: “I am saying ‘uh-oh.’ You are smiling!”
- Make eye contact with an infant when you speak with him/her. Use smiles and other facial expressions to support the infant’s engagement with you as you speak.
- Speak in short sentences.

##### Aware of the meaning of several words

- Use a child’s name frequently when speaking with him/her. Say your name. Example: “You are Sammy! I am Miss Tanya.” Point to infant and to self, and accentuate each name as you say it.
- Name a food item an infant is eating or is offered. Point to the item as you say it. Point to and say “diaper” during a diaper change.
- Point to pictured objects or persons during a book sharing. Use a book that shows and describes objects (Block 13, Option 3). Point to and say the name of a toy(s) an infant is exploring during a playtime.



- Offer an appropriate greeting/farewell at arrival/departure times. Use the same greeting/farewell word each day. Add a gesture, such as waving goodbye as you say "bye-bye!" Encourage an older infant to offer the same gesture as you name the gesture.

## Expressive language

### Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver

- Play games that provide opportunities for the infant to vocalize, such as those in Block 8, Options 1 and 2.
- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any infant utterance. Repeat the infant's utterance. Example: "You are saying 'ba-ba-ba' to me! Ba-ba-ba!"
- Demonstrate use of simple language. Example: If an infant points to a picture in a book, say the name of an image in the book. "You are pointing at the picture of a baby in our book. Baby. This is a baby."
- Repeat or adapt an activity that encourages the infant to repeat a familiar word with you (Block 7, Option 3; Block 14, Option 2).
- Select a book sharing activity option (Block 15, Option 3) with a repetitive word the infant can say with you. Encourage the infant to say the word or part of the word with you.

## Reinforce

## Receptive language

### Responds to an adult's words

- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any sign that the infant notices you are speaking or pays attention to a word(s) you say. Examples: "You are looking at me. You hear my words." "You are waving your arms while I sing."
- Repeat words you want an infant to notice. Use facial expressions, gestures, and/or other forms of nonverbal communication to accentuate your word(s).

### Aware of the meaning of several words

- Remember that a book with one bold image per page is most appropriate for young infants.<sup>3</sup> This enables you to emphasize one or two words in naming or describing an image in a book.
- Encourage the infant to point to an object or aspect of a pictured image in a book. Example: "You can point to the baby's nose!" (Block 7, Option 3).
- During diapering and mealtimes, use simple sentences to describe your actions and the actions or reactions of the infant.
- Add words to an infant's nonverbal request. Example: If an infant points to a cracker, ask "Do you want a cracker?" Emphasize the word "cracker."



## Expressive language

### Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver<sup>4</sup>

- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any infant utterances. Examples: "I am smiling at you and you are making little cooing noises! It's fun to talk together!" "You are crying. I think you want me to do something for you."
- Imitate or repeat an infant's utterance.
- Offer experiences that involve repetitive use of an utterance or coherent word. Invite the infant to say with you a repeated word, such as "more" (Block 21, Option 3) or part of the repeated word, such as "peek" in "peekaboo" (Block 2, Option 3; Block 5, Options 2 and 3) and "night" in "goodnight" (Block 12, Option 3). The infant should not be expected to clearly articulate the repeated word.

## EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

*Recently Hunter has started to use babbling in conversations with me. He enjoys hearing me repeat his babbling. I will continue to provide opportunities for Hunter to communicate with me in this way. His babbling in our conversations is a good step in language development.*

*Jamie is showing signs of knowing what some important words mean. She knows your (parents') names and her first name. Yesterday she joined me in pointing to a baby's nose in a picture book we looked at together. I will continue to help Jamie become familiar with the names of people and things in our room and in books we share.*

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The categories and behaviors are informed by the following source: Bricker, D., Capt, B., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2002). *Assessment, evaluation, and programming system for infants and children, 2nd ed., Vol. 2: Test, birth to three years and three to six years*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- <sup>2</sup> The infant's response shows awareness that an adult is speaking. The response does not need to show awareness of what the adult is saying; awareness of the meaning of a word(s) is a more advanced skill and a separate behavior category.
- <sup>3</sup> See p. 14 in the Communication/Language section of the *ELM Curriculum User Guide: Birth–36 Months*.
- <sup>4</sup> Some activity plans in other areas also support an infant's expressive language development. Examples: Social-Emotional Block 1, Option 1 and Block 2, Option 2.