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# Development Required Before a Child Can Read

## Developmental Preparation

1. sensorial development to receive information
2. perceptual development in order to organize, understand and integrate information
3. neurological (tactal, stereognostic, etc.) to utilize information in a physical manner
4. social development of interpersonal relationships to relate to people and events
5. symbolic development in order to decode (Geometric Cabinet prepares the child)
6. concept formation
7. verbal language
8. visual language (reading)

## Development Needed

1. gross motor control
2. fine muscle control
3. eye-hand coordination
4. ability to perceive figure in space (walking on line, etc.)
5. directionality (top-bottom, right side, left side, etc.)
6. ability to organize a temporal, spatial relationship (understanding difference between in and on)
7. ability to differentiate contrasting symbol and sound (e.g. “a” and “t” is a good contrast in sound and symbol, but “b” and “p” are too similar)
8. ability to classify
9. ability to understand conceptions presented in text (content meaning)
10. well developed auditory discrimination
11. ability to focus and listen to verbal instructions
12. general ability to focus on the task in hand

# Language Retention and Comprehension Skills in Early Childhood

The child is continually acquiring and refining language skills from the time she is born throughout her early childhood years. As a Montessori guide, it is essential to develop keen observation skills of the children as a primary focus. The adult guide continuously assesses the developmental levels of every child based on her daily interactions with the child and the child's behaviors.

The Montessori Language exercises provide both the adult and the child a direct channel for communication with one another. The guide is simultaneously teaching language material while assessing the child's receptivity to new words and concepts as well as her level of verbal expression.

While every child develops at a unique rate and possesses an individual learning style, early childhood and pediatric specialists identify specific milestones that the young child should achieve by a certain age-range.

In terms of language and communication development, by two years of age, most children have the ability to:

- point to objects or pictures when they are named
- know the names of familiar people and objects
- speak in "sentences" of 2-4 words
- follow simple instructions

Between the ages of two and three years, most children develop the ability to:

- speak in two- and three-word phrases or sentences
- use at least 200 words and as many as 1,000 words
- state their first name
- refer to themselves with pronouns (I, me, my or mine)
- be understood most of the time by family or close friends

Most children who are three- to four-years old are able to:

- follow verbal instructions with 2-3 steps

- understand preposition words such as “in,” “on,” and “under”
- use plural words correctly
- name a friend
- carry on a conversation using 2-3 sentences
- be understood by most people, even strangers, when speaking

Language and speech delays are the most common type of developmental delay. Language delays and speech delays are different types of issues. Speech refers to the sounds that come out of a person’s mouth. Children with a speech delay might struggle to say words properly or stutter.

Language refers to the specific meanings of sounds and gestures. Children who have a language delay issue might have trouble expressing themselves or understanding others.

A speech or language delay can be caused by an oral impairment with the child’s tongue or palate of the mouth. Delays can also be the result of oral-motor problems in the area of the brain that is responsible for speech. The child may struggle with coordinating her lips, tongue, and jaw to make articulated sounds.

Hearing problems can also contribute to language and speech delays, particularly in children who suffer from chronic ear infections.

Most children struggling with a speech or language delay will exhibit signs by two years of age. The following signs suggest that a child (who is two- to three- years old) may be experiencing language or speech difficulties:

- The child can only imitate speech or actions; does not produce words or phrases spontaneously.
- The child says only some sounds or words repeatedly; cannot use verbal language to communicate more than her immediate needs.
- The child struggles to follow simple directions.
- The child’s tone of voice is unusual (such as raspy or nasal sounding).

While it is important to consider the milestones of a child’s development as outlined from a pediatric perspective, it is equally essential for the Montessori guide to remain balanced in her assessments of every young child. Developmental milestones must be viewed in a flexible manner in order for the child’s individual path of learning to naturally unfold.

While it is important to consider the milestones of a child's development as outlined from a pediatric perspective, it is equally essential for the Montessori guide to remain balanced in her assessments of every young child. Developmental milestones must be viewed in a flexible manner in order for the child's individual path of learning to naturally unfold.

In some cases, a child who shows no signs of retention or comprehension during lessons with the adult may not be experiencing a developmental delay at all. This is why the observation skills of the guide are so vital to understanding how each individual child learns differently. A guide may repeat the same lesson with a child many times before the child is successful in the third period of naming specific objects or identifying the sound that matches the Sandpaper Letter. Language acquisition and development is an internal process that every child experiences differently. The guide should not automatically assume that a child is experiencing a developmental delay when the child's recall is not immediately apparent. The child's ability to outwardly express the multitude of language concepts that have been forming inside of her unconscious mind is a major task, and something that some children take longer to manifest than others.

Nevertheless, having the ability to recognize when a child is struggling to communicate can alert the adult to language and speech skills the child may need additional help developing.

The adult can support the child who may be experiencing a language or speech delay by implementing the following techniques:

- Break down verbal directions into smaller, manageable steps.
- Teach and use sign language as a way to communicate basic needs and ideas.
- Always build on the verbalizations of the child. For example, if the child says "truck!" offer the statement "that is a truck" or "that truck is blue."
- Read books with the child on a regular basis for continual exposure to spoken language.

A child who continues to exhibit signs of a language or speech delay by the age of two- to three-years would likely benefit from a consultation with a speech-language pathologist for more in-depth therapy to be introduced.