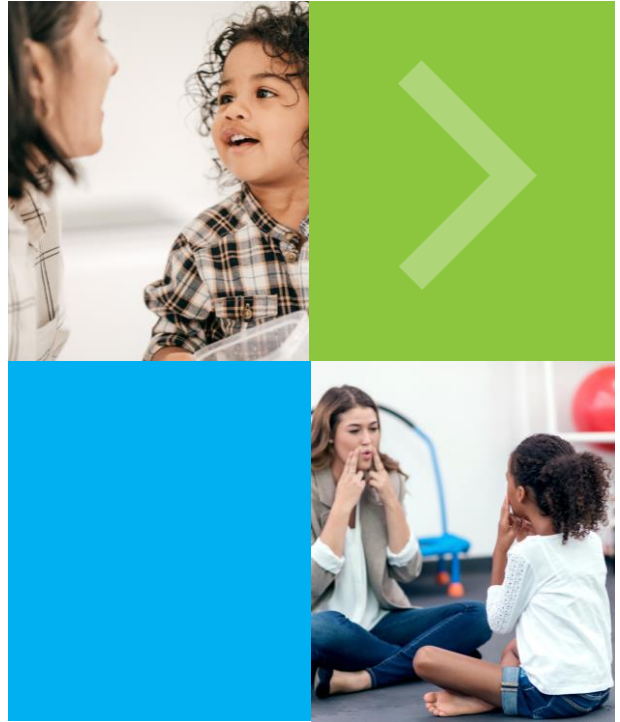




***Sh-h: The Conversation without Words:  
Exploring the Importance of Gestural  
Communication***

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## Gestural Communication

- *"Over 75% of communication is non-verbal"*
- *Research indicates that gestural communication is a very significant prognostic indicator for language development*
- *Need to have a conversation without words before you can have a conversation with words*
- *Love example , Daddy and baby example and preschool video example*

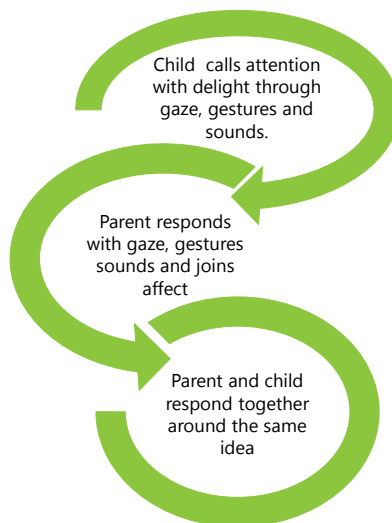
## Pre-Cursors to Language

During the 1<sup>st</sup> 12 months before 1<sup>st</sup> words children develop the foundations:

- **Shared attention**
- **Affective Engagement**
- **Intentionality**
- **Reciprocity**
- **Building Ideas and Meaning**

Communication happens in the context of playful interactions of parents, caretakers, clinicians, etc,

## Sharing Attention



# Serve and Return Exchanges' Build the Brain from the Bottom Up

Serve and exchange or opening and closing of circles

The child or the caregiver sends a signal:

- **Look**
- **Sound (cry, coo, babble, sound effect)**
- **Facial expression**
- **Gesture**
- **Word**
- **Movement or action**



Each exchange is **individualized** to the child's needs and developmental capabilities, interests and individual differences. This is the basis of communication development!

## Intentionality

- **Intentionality** refers to a child's ability to send messages on purpose, directly to someone to achieve a specific goal
- Individuals with uneven processing, motor planning challenges etc. may demonstrate intent in an 'unconventional' way
  - **Behavior that is not intentional**  
Child looks at cookies on a table and makes a sound  
Child smiles when she sees her favorite musical toy
  - **Intentional behavior**  
Child looks at cookies, makes a sound, then looks at mom  
Child smiles, then gives her favorite toy to dad so that he can turn it on

Laura Lowery, Hanen

# Talking Starts With Gestures

## What are Gestures

- Fingers
- Hands and arms
- Facial features
  - e.g., lip smacking for eating
- Body motions
  - e.g., bouncing for "horsie" rhyme

## Types of Gestures

- Showing gestures
  - e.g., showing, giving, pointing
- Symbolic gestures
  - e.g., "shh", bird flapping, airplane gesture
- Shaking head "no"

Centre

Crais 2004; The Hanen

Wetherby 2001, Goldin-Meadow 2007

# Shared Forms and Meanings

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Fundamental for Comprehension

## Gestural Communication and Comprehension

- Child receives and responds to communicative signals of others, sounds, speech sounds, affect & tone
- Response to gestures and sounds of others with contextual clues and without
- Understands words for absent objects, some two-term combinations, shared intentions in language
- Comprehension of sentences, discourse & 'wh' questions



## Gestural Communication Informs Treatment

Observe child's gestural communication.

- Are the child's gestures typical/conventional or atypical?
- Are the child's play partners able to attune to their gestures?
- Does the child have a broad range of gestures (the preschool video example)
- Does the child initiate using gestures? Respond using gestures?
- Do they comprehend your gestures?
- Are you considering the child's individual differences and the impact on gestural communication (give examples)
- Focus on gesture and affect; they are more important than verbal language and give meaning that is emotionally laden

## Dr. Amy Wetherby's 16 before 16

### 9 months: give, shake head

- At 9 months, children's earliest gestures begin to develop from their actions — and the reactions of others. Children first learn to take an object. Then, as they are able to control their hand movements to release and drop an object, they gain experience from their parent holding out their hand to catch it — and they learn to **give**.
- Children learn to **shake their head** to indicate "no" by turning away from food they do not like and then looking back to see their parent respond by moving the undesired food away.

### 10 months: reach, raise arms

- At 10 months, children learn to **reach** through exploration and experiences with others, as they reach to take an object and to be picked up.
- As they learn to anticipate the reactions of others, they use a reach gesture as a signal — first, with their arm reaching out, then, with their open hand facing up, and with their **arms raised** to ask to be picked up.

### 11 months: show, wave

- At 11 months, children are motivated to share their interests with others. They learn to hold up and **show** objects to get others to look and notice what they're interested in.
- Children are also motivated by the social experience of greeting in everyday routines where special people are coming and going. They learn to wiggle their hand to wave, with a mature **wave** developing later.

## Dr. Amy Wetherby's 16 before 16

### 12 months: open-hand point and tap

- At 12 months, children use an **open-hand point** with the fingers spread, and a **tap** with the fingers together, as an indicative gesture to draw the attention of others to things of interest. Children's gestures become more clearly intentional and are often produced with emphasis and are now accompanied by grunts or early speech sounds.

### 13 months: clap, blow a kiss

- At 13 months, children begin to learn through observation — by observing others and copying what they do and say. They learn to use gestures, such as to **clap** their hands and **blow a kiss**, by watching others and imitating them. The gestures and words children are exposed to shape their vocabulary and drive their interest in learning.

## Dr. Amy Wetherby's 16 before 16

### 14 months: index finger point, "shhh" gesture

- At 14 months, children **point with the index finger** to reference things at a distance, a sign that observational learning is solid and they are on the cusp of becoming a symbolic communicator. Children also use the index finger for the "**shhh**" gesture. Their growing repertoire of gestures propels the unfolding of spoken words.

### 15 months: head nod, thumbs up, hand up

- At 15 months, you see symbolic gestures that are like words — a **head nod** or **thumbs up** to indicate "yes", a **wave** in front of their face to indicate "stinky", or a **hand up** to indicate "wait". Gestures now reflect not only what the child is thinking about, but also that they know they are sharing ideas with others.

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## Dr. Amy Wetherby's 16 before 16

### 16 months: other symbolic gestures

- At 16 months, other symbolic gestures develop — such as "**I dunno**", "**high 5**", or even the universal **peace sign**. Gestures now bolster the learning of spoken words.
- Use this as a guide to focus your intervention on supporting the development and the use of these gestures
- Use the child's individual differences as a stepping off point (example of a child with motor planning challenges)

## Take Away “Nuggets”

- Consider that non-verbal communication is a child’s first language
- Give yourself permission to pay attention to and focus on gestural communication
- Help parents/caregivers to understand WHY you are focusing there by discussing the research by Dr. A. Wetherby and others that clearly indicates that a child needs to be able to have a conversation without words before they can have a conversation with words
- Remember that co-regulation supports non-verbal communication.
- Focus on gesture and affect; they are more important than verbal language and give meaning that is emotionally laden



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