Using Yoga to Enhance Language
in Children Who Use More Involved Communication
Typical Development: Ages 4-5, Preschool Children

Preschool-aged children are acquiring language at a rapid rate. Working on the sounds that words make, following verbal directions and describing colors, shapes and sizes are important language building blocks.

Phonics/vocabulary. Like toddlers, these children can also sing and act out the alphabet. As the child names the pose, ask her what letter the pose begins with and what sound that letter m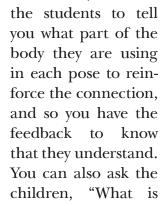akes (e.g., Down Dog: "D" makes the "Duh" sound). When new words or poses come along, make sure and review what the word means and what sounds make up the word.

Comprehension. Group the poses together and make up a story. Formulate and plan the story ahead of class. Tell the children about the story verbally, using the illustrated yoga cards as a supplement. Next, tell the story with you and the children acting out the various poses. If the children are ready, have them mimic the sounds of the animal characters in the story. At the end of the story, to incorporate speech and language skills, ask the children, "Who was in the story?, What happened in the story?" and "Where did the story take place?" If they have difficultly answering the questions, summarize the story for them and rephrase the questions.

Vocabulary. When doing the poses, make sure you are using opportunities to review vocabulary words and concepts they might not be familiar with. This could include body parts (e.g., shin), things associated with animals (e.g., What is a baby elephant is called?) or uses for objects (e.g., What does an archer aim?). Instruct the students to tell you what part of the body they are using in each pose to reinforce the connection, and so you have the feedback to know that they understand. You can also ask the children, "What is the color of the animal in the pose?," "Where does the animal live?" or "What is the animal's shape?"

Spatial-oppositional concepts. Review basic spatial-oppositional concepts (e.g., *under/over*) and start introducing more advanced concepts (e.g., *big/bigger/biggest, near/far, empty/full*).

Following directions. Instruct the students to repeat simple directions and comply. Start with one-step directions first, and then add additional steps, one at a time, to increase the complexity.

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