

## Tips for Better Communications Skills

Mrs. Ziems M.A. CCC-SLP and Ms. Pasarin SLP Intern FIU

Many times parents are not aware of how thumb sucking, pacifier use and extended bottle feeding can affect the development of speech and language because of the impact on the tongue, teeth, lips, ears and language learning .

From our experience as Speech-Language Pathologists as well as research done by Danielle LaPrairie M.S. SLP-CF, the strength and movement of the tongue can be impaired with prolonged use of the bottle, pacifier and thumb sucking (November, 2010). We have observed consistent distortions of multiple sounds that occur when there is a history of these oral habits. If the child tries to talk while keeping a pacifier, bottle or thumb in their mouth the air flow and tongue positions are misplaced. The child learns improper mouth placement which can prevent appropriate sound production. Using these oral sucking habits during the day, beyond the night routine, can increase the negative effects and reduce the child's need or desire to talk and build communication skills.

Research has also shown that children who use the pacifier beyond the age of 2 years are at the greatest risk of speech problems and an increased occurrence of middle ear infections. Recurring middle ear infections can also interfere with the normal development of language and learning (Calvert, Goldacker, LaPrairie, & Throneburg, 2011). The continued use of these oral practices can also lead to increased protrusion of teeth and improper bite according to the Journal of the American Dental Association (Nov. 2010). This malformation can lead to poor mouth placement which results in poor speech development.

It is important to consider this information when making decisions about your child. Parent choices are very influential in the development of children.

December 2015