

Book Review

Title: *Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome*

Author: Libby Kumin

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Reviewer: Martha Guinan, MPH, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai'i

Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome, is an indispensable guide about language acquisition for young children with Down syndrome. The author, Libby Kumin, is the nationally recognized authority on the subject.

This book is an updated, expanded edition of her earlier work, *Communication Skills in Children with Down Syndrome* (1994). She takes a practical approach providing understandable technical explanations and related activities to increase learning and language. She concentrates on the early ages where language makes the most impact, from birth to about ages 5 or 6. Dr. Kumin describes the stages of communication development and how physical characteristics common to Down syndrome affect acquisition of language and speech skills. She explains how the delayed progression of those skills can lead to frustration and other problems.

Leading readers through the results of a speech-language assessment, Dr. Kumin helps us understand the role of a speech language pathologist. To prepare the parent, she describes what to expect in communication skills development in school. A proponent of inclusion, she emphasizes the need for strong communication models and opportunities to practice communication skills. She describes school language demands such as the language of instruction, curriculum, testing and classroom routine and its effect. For example children with Down syndrome may have difficulty following long and complex verbal directions. By breaking the directions down, they can experience success in following classroom rules.

Through explanations and strategies to improve expressive communication skills, this book is an able assistant to the parent in alleviating the frustrations of a child who may not have intelligible speech until age two or later. Every parent of a child with Down syndrome can attest to their own, as well as their child's, frustration of others needing the parent to serve as interpreter.

Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome puts 23 years of research and experience in working with people with Down syndrome into an easily readable guidebook for parents and caregivers about characteristics unique to Down syndrome and their impact on language development. It is highly recommended as an informational resource by parents, caretakers, teachers, and anyone else charged with the responsibility of caring for a child with Down syndrome.