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Lessons on language in a week of learning skills

SUNDAY marked the beginning of Speech Pathology week.

This year's "Language for Life" theme highlights the long-term effects of speech and language disorders and explores the importance of communication throughout all stages of life.

As part of this week, local speech pathologists Rachael Bowles, Dee Hollett and Sumangi Perera raise the significance of language difficulties in the early years.

"Speech pathologists are the key professionals who work with individuals with speech and language difficulties", said Ms Bowles.

"Timely and early intervention can significantly assist children and their families."

Parents, carers, grandparents and community members are encouraged to spend time each day playing, listening, talking and reading with their children. "Opportunities for interaction start the day a baby is born," Ms Bowles said.

She went on to suggest some helpful hints to use

when sharing books with your baby, toddler or child.

- Choose a comfortable cosy place;
- Choose books with bright pictures and few words;
- Share different types of books like lift-the flap, touch and feel or board books;
- Look at the pictures and make up your own story;
- Encourage your child to join in the story and talk about the pictures;
- Choose stories about your child's interests.

• Be prepared to read and re-read favourite stories; Visit your local library often and involve your child in choosing books.

"Helping to encourage good early language skills will open a world of opportunities for your child.

"It will also give them a strong base from which to build other skills such as literacy,"

Ms Bowles said.

For further information please contact Rachael Bowles in the Speech Pathology department at the Upper Great Southern Primary Health Service on 9881 0385.