

Of Dinosaurs and Excavators

Though we often try not to enforce gender differences especially in early childhood education, the differences do seem to pop up. Within recent years, I have realized how young boys often choose to play with dinosaurs and vehicles. Stop and think about the names we've given dinosaurs and vehicles.

<i>stegosaurus</i>	<i>excavators</i>
<i>brachiosaurus</i>	<i>skidders</i>
<i>diplodocus</i>	<i>ditch diggers</i>
<i>tyrannosaurus rex</i>	<i>cement mixers</i>
<i>triceratops</i>	<i>bucket loaders</i>
<i>ankylosaurus</i>	<i>bull dozers</i>

Besides being long words with lots of syllables, look at some of those sounds and sound combinations. Whoo! To me, it was a major discovery when this hit my brain cells. These are really tough words to pronounce - even for adults! How can we expect a four-year old child to pronounce these words with perfection? You might listen more carefully to your child the next time they are playing with vehicles or dinosaurs. Perhaps some of what you think is unintelligible speech is actually this vocabulary.

Compare to what girls may focus on in doll and kitchen play:

<i>baby</i>	<i>doll</i>
<i>bottle</i>	<i>blanket</i>
<i>eat</i>	<i>drink</i>
<i>night-night</i>	<i>bye-bye</i>
<i>juice</i>	<i>apple</i>
<i>sit</i>	<i>more</i>

These are mostly one-syllable words with fairly early developmental easy sounds and sound combinations. Could this be a contributing factor in why boys have an increased rate of unintelligibility as they develop speech? I don't believe there is any research to support this finding, but I'm definitely wondering.