



Language and Literacy Development

Written by Brianna Holmes, MA

Strategies to Develop Teacher's Classroom Talk Skills

Reflect:

- Keep journals about classroom conversations;
- Discuss why conversations have a positive effect.

Observe and Discuss:

- Teachers observe each others conversations;
- Note how often teachers talk and what was said; and
- Think of ways to add more complex talk.

Experiment:

- Add one new way of talking with children; and
- Have more conversations in a center or daily routine.

Reference: Test, J., Cunningham, D., Lee, R. (2010) *Talking with Young Children: How Teachers Encourage Learning*. Dimensions of Early Childhood. Volume 38.3.

Language development is the foundation for communication, problem-solving, reasoning, learning, and thinking. Language development begins at birth, through listening to conversations. It expands as children learn to read and write.

There are four foundational domains of language development: oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness.

Oral Language- allows children to communicate, learn new skills and develop a vocabulary.

Phonological Awareness- listening to sounds, spoken language and imitation of auditory sounds. This is the foundation for children learning how to communicate. Children begin to make the sounds they hear in order to try to form words and express themselves.

Alphabet knowledge- the connection of sounds and letters. Children begin to identify the letters and formulate the sound.

Print awareness- how the words and letters are connected. Children begin to identify letters and the word that is developed from them.

Reference:

Brown, S. *Language and Literacy Development in the Early Years: Foundational Skills that Support Emergent Readers*. The Language and Literacy Spectrum. Volume 24.

Classroom Activities that Promote Talk

1. Sensory play- encourages children to talk about what they are doing and launch conversations.
2. Blocks- children communicate to discuss what they are going to build, where and who will build it.
3. Dramatic Play- children negotiate and develop themes, roles, and rules. Use a variety of props to stimulate interest and talk.
4. Photo albums and scrapbooks- promote meaningful conversations by revisiting shared experiences.
5. Cooking- children make connections in literacy, math and science. This can be a source of easy and fun talk.

Reference: National Association for the Education of Young Children(2008). *Let's Give Children Something to Talk About: Oral Language and Preschool Literacy*.



Creating a Print-Rich Environment

Remember, literacy is more than just reading! Here are some strategies to use to enhance language and literacy development in the classroom.

1. Use posters and pictures in the classroom with letters and words to increase print awareness.
2. Play a variety of music with rhymes and letter sounds.
3. Create labels in the classroom. This may include labeling classroom furnishings and play materials. For younger children, provide a picture next to the word.
4. Provide a variety of age appropriate books throughout the classroom.
5. Create a word wall. This is a great way to introduce words and letters to children during large group time. Display the word wall at children's eye-level so it serves as an on-going teaching/learning tool.