

Oral Language Tip Sheet

Grade 1 Language and Literacy Project

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Oral language helps children develop literacy skills and is associated with later reading and writing achievement.

What is oral language?

“Oral language refers to the ability to produce and comprehend spoken language.” (NELP, 2008, p. 43)

It forms the basis of speaking, listening, reading and writing. One of the skills associated with oral language is vocabulary - the ability to understand and produce words in the appropriate context. It also encompasses the knowledge of how to group words into phrases and sentences, following standard organizational rules, to communicate a meaningful message.

Ways to enhance oral language development

- Facilitating social interaction; adult-child and child-child
- Listening and responding to children’s initiation of conversation
- Scaffolding oral language development through modeling, skillful questioning (recall/open-ended) and providing feedback to extend learning
- Engaging in extended, cognitively challenging conversations
- Introducing new vocabulary words during instruction to support complex oral language development
- Creating a classroom environment for conversation;
 - areas for story retelling and interactive group work
 - times for class meetings and student pairings
 - routines with familiar partners and small groups
 - meaningful print (children’s and teacher’s) around the room
 - choice of best literature to provide a good language model for children

Activities to promote oral language

- meet and greet
- circle time
- daily news
- “show and tell”
- songs, rhymes and word play
- dramatic play (pretend with props)
- structured tasks to ask questions/share information with peers
- choral response / choral reading
- shared reading
- interactive reading (book conversations)
- repeated readings
- retelling a story
- Readers’ theatre

References

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